



MASKED KNIGHT

BOOK 01

Tiao Wu

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Masked Knight

by

Dancing

Synopsis

In a world where magic and sorcery flourish came a tale of a nobody who grew into a legend. Partake in the conquests and tribulations of a great army where warriors live day-to-day, seeking the thrill of combat.

Experience heart-rending drama and hilarious situations while awaiting the impending arrival of the malevolent evil stirring in the darkest depths of the world...

Journey alongside Rody, a young knight, as he dons a mask of circumstances that is filled with secrets to unravel the mysteries of the universe!

Acknowledgement

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Chapter 1: Warriors and Virgins

Rody was an honest man without much ambition. He preferred a lazy and carefree life. His only wish was to pass the school's swordplay examination next month so that he could become a low-levelled swordsman. It was also his late accursed father's last wish.

Of course, if the heavens had bestowed upon him a pretty face when he was 18 years old so that he could get rid of his virginity, it would be even better!

It was unfortunate but Rody knew that his wish was difficult to achieve. The fact was that, although he was very confident in his swordplay, his biggest problem was not actually passing the examination but instead paying the tuition fees for the student courses. He would not be able to pay it unless he was able to get top three in the swordplay examination and eradicated all of his opponents. At that time, he would be given enough award money to pay for his tuition and have some leftovers.

However, Rody was just a normal person. He knew that the people scoring top 3 in the examinations were either the sons of counts or the sons of generals. Assholes. Those rich people did not need money. Why would they want to compete with the poor families for bonuses? Unfortunately, for the rich, they only wanted the title of top 3 to show off to the others.

As for the women problem, Rody did not even dare to wish for it anymore. Actually, he had pretty good looks. He looked like a normal person that was neither too tall nor too short. It was too bad that the heavens seemed to want to punish him and left a black mark on his face. A large birthmark the size of his palm covered his left cheek. His handsome face that should have attracted millions of girls turned literally into a Yin Yang face.

As a result, Rody gave up hope. It was clear to him that unless the woman was blind or had mental issues, they would never have an

interest in him.

Rody sat on the bed in the room and looked at the only thing of value on the walls. It was a standard sword for warriors of the Empire. Rody bought this sword for 3 silvers. That being said, he was not qualified to use the sword at this moment because his swordplay examination would only be held next month. Unless he passed the examination and acquired the title of Swordsman, he would not be eligible to carry weapons. In the empire, ordinary citizens were not allowed to carry weapons. Fortunately, he was also a student in the Imperial Academy and had a student card. This allowed him to carry weapons within the school.

Rody wiped the sword clean with his clean scarf. He recalled the lessons and skills taught by the instructors in the morning by his teacher, Shale.

In fact, the teacher knew that his young students were going to take part in the annual examination next month, which was why he had been giving them special training for the past few days. Rody was one of Shale's more promising students. Shale once told Rody privately that Rody's strength had already surpassed the standard level of a Grade 1 swordsman and he would have no problem passing the examination. According to Shale, throughout his many years of teaching, Rody was the most outstanding student he had ever taught and that he was a genius. Even though everybody knew that Rody's skills were not bad, nobody took Shale's words seriously, especially that part about Rody being a genius. After all, in all these years, the old man had never ever successfully trained a student beyond Grade 3.

How could such an incompetent teacher produce geniuses? Rody's only worry for the examination was to avoid meeting Instructor Yanshi, the person who had always found fault with Shale. The people in the academy all knew about the not-so-harmonious relationship between Shale and Yanshi. The origins of their enmity stemmed from their competition for a female

teacher's admiration many years ago. These two teachers would always find fault with each other. It also just so happened that Shale's student who would be taking the examination was Rody and that Yanshi was his examiner.

Rody felt very depressed.

Wearing his sword, Rody turned to his closet for a while before pulling out a fairly clean and beautiful uniform. He decided to go for a walk outside, but then hesitated and decided to stroll around outside the academy instead. Perhaps he would buy some bread for tomorrow's meal. He did not want to go to the streets with his sword, as public security might arrest him.

Rody stepped out of his room and walked into a corridor with a moldy smell. Even though he was tortured with this smell for 2 years, he was still unable to adapt to it.

After all, he was staying in the cheap dormitory of the academy. The rooms were extremely cheap at 5 silver coins per year. However, the living condition of the place was appalling.

There were a series of reforms made by the Great Sage Dandong of the Empire. He had greatly increased the power of the Empire and in later years, persuaded the Emperor to allow civilians to enroll into the Imperial Academy. He also became the headmaster of the academy. Although he faced strong protests from the other nobles, he even developed a piece of land just to accommodate the civilians. Rody was living in that building that was built by Dandong, specifically for civilians.

Speaking from conscience, this building was actually very good and could accommodate 200 civilians, each with their own room, even if the rooms were as small as a pigeon cage. However, after Dandong's death, nobles have always held the academy's headmaster post. The nobles, as a special show of grace, had not expelled the civilians but it was actually out of respect for the late 5th generation Emperor's decree. However, the nobles also had not

spent a single coin to maintain the building in the past 200 years!

Rody carefully walked down the stairs. Only the heavens knew whether the 200-year-old stairs could support his weight. He did not want to be the first swordsman in the history of the Empire who perished by falling down the stairs. Even though the stairs gave off a scary creaking sound as Rody walked down, nothing of note happened as Rody reached the bottom of the stairs. He opened the front door and left the multi-storied building.

The evening weather was good and the moon was already visible. He followed the path to another civilian building and shouted, “Star!”

Not long later, a window from the second floor opened revealing a person with long hair.

“Rody you fool! Quiet down a bit!” Star looked around in a panic before further opening the window and jumping out. Rody frowned. “Are you climbing out of windows again? Are you not afraid of being seen? Even if it is nighttime, you must still be careful.”

If Rody was considered a poor civilian, Star would be poverty stricken. He could not afford the rent of 5 silver coins and was recently evicted. Thankfully, he had already paid the tuition fees for the year. Otherwise, even his status as a student might not hold on.

However, Star was not someone who would simply abide by the law. The school’s security had watched him move out but he had stealthily moved back in. Anyway, the number of civilian students in the Imperial Academy was very little in recent years. That was why, even when Star had vacated his room, nobody would be there to move in. Also, because of the terrible stench coming from the ancient building, the security team did not bother to check as well. So, Star was brazenly freeloading the place.

Star patted Rody’s shoulder. He was at least a head shorter than

Rody. However, he had a face that made Rody envious. It was a face that allowed Star to court girls. According to Star, he had already bid farewell to his virginity 3 years ago.

Rody was not envious of Star for most things but this one incident made Rody's eyes turn red.

Facing his best friend, Rody sighed. "So, where are we going?"

Star turned to him and whispered in a mysterious tone, "Rody, do you want to make some money? I happen to have found a way!"

Make money?

Rody's eyes lit up. The thing he needed now was money! Without money, even if he passed the swordplay examination, he would not have enough to pay for next year's tuition fee.

"Make money? What idea do you have?" Rody stared at his good friend.

Star laughed and whispered, "This method is a little bit risky but I have tried it and frankly speaking, I have also settled next year's tuition fee. Originally, I was worried as this method is not suitable for you, but recently, seeing you get anxious over money makes me think that you would dare to try it anyway."

Rody was immediately cautious. He knew that his friend was not a law-abiding person and, listening to his friend's tone, it was quite certain that this method would not be an honorable one.

"Don't look at me like that, Rody!" Star pushed Rody and took him to a remote path with no else around. He looked around to confirm that there was really no one before whispering. "I recently met a few people doing some kind of special business. Now they temporarily need a few extra hands. After completing the job, we can take the money and leave. Naturally, it is a little bit risky. I only did the job once but I earned enough to pay next year's tuition fee."

"Is... Is it illegal?" Rody said the word 'illegal' with some

difficulty.

Star rolled his eyes which seemingly replied, “Nonsense!”

“All right,” Rody sighed. “Take me there!”

Rody slowly nodded his head. He did not expect that this nod would be the start of his endless, eventful legend.

He also did not expect that this nod would change his two wishes, be it about money or women, tremendously.

Chapter 2: A Failed Robber

Looking at the rusted, chipped blade in his hands, Rody could not believe that he had followed others and became a robber.

Star had brought Rody to a place called the Wild Boar Pub where they met a one-eyed middle-aged fatty. Star then told the fat person that they needed money and were looking for a job.

Although the man knew Star, he did not have much confidence in Rody. Star assured him that Rody was more skillful than himself and also said that Rody was an honest and reliable person. Even then, the man decided to test Rody's skills.

Fortunately, that concern disappeared when Rody demolished the table with one punch.

The fat man was now immediately enthusiastic about Rody. He realized that this student of the Imperial Academy possessed strength surpassing that of a Grade 1 swordsman. He only had 2 other people of such talent under his leadership at the moment. With the participation of this young man, that night's business would have a high chance of success!

The fat man brought them to a secret room at the back of the pub. Inside, there were 3 more people in simple clothes. Their faces were covered with masks up till their eyes. They looked at Star and Rody with vigilant eyes. They all knew Star and looked at him with respect. They did not dare to disrespect a mage! In particular, Star, who was a mage of electrical affinity! None of them would want to become roasted by electricity.

However, when they saw Rody's eyes, they were not as friendly. Particularly when they saw Rody's Yin Yang face, they all held back their laughter. Rody had been accustomed to such reactions over the years and was not particularly bothered. At the very least, he showed no emotional changes.

When the fatty distributed the weapons to them and briefed them about their job, Rody started to become muddleheaded.

"Remember! You are not bandits! However, you must pretend to be bandits! Your mission is to intercept the carriage and teach a bitter lesson to the nobles in the carriage! Remember! Do not kill! Robbing them is enough! My employer hired us to teach them a lesson! If you kill them, be prepared to be sent to the guillotine! When you return, each person will get 2 gold coins! Be careful of the bodyguards. I heard that they have Grade 3 bodyguards! However, a few of you should be able to defeat one of the bodyguards if you gang up on him with a sneak attack."

Rody, Star and the other 3 partners took their weapons and waited among the trees outside the city. They watched nervously from a distance. Frankly, Rody was starting to regret.

He knew that this was not a big job as he was just hired to be a temporary bandit. In the city, there were lots of people earning money this way. Even some unconventional warriors had made money in this manner. However, if he failed and his identity was exposed, he would be expelled from the academy and his future would be finished.

However, as he thought about it slowly, if he could not obtain the money, he would also be expelled in a month's time. Either way, the result would be the same!

Gradually, Rody started to feel better. This was because the target was said to be an annoying noble: this helped to stop Rody from feeling guilty. Rody did not have a favorable impression of the rich, wasteful and immoral nobles.

They were near a path leading out of the city.

This road was usually empty but ever since His Majesty had constructed a road here, there had been more travelers. The purpose of this road was obviously to collect taxes!

"Be careful! They are coming!" One of the guys with a sword in his hand whispered. Rody looked at him. He was lying down with his ear lightly pressed to the ground. The guy looked up and told them, "Get ready. They are coming this way. The carriage is here!"

Rody did not like this person because he was the first to pick a weapon. The weapon this person took was a sword that Rody had wanted as well. Based on his posture, this person was not a swordsman which was why Rody did not know why he insisted on taking this sword. Rody had wanted to trade the rusty knife in his hands for that sword.

During quiet nights, you would not find a single traveler here. However, from a distant carriage, the sound of horses trampling on the ground was clearly audible. Rody felt nervous as he looked at Star. Star also looked nervous but it was not as bad as Rody. After all, Star had done this before.

"What a terrible night!" Nicole played with her fingers before drawing the curtains of the carriage. The moonlight shone on her and illuminated her beautiful golden hair, making her look like a goddess.

Nicole was not happy as it had been a terrible night. Baron Sloan, Her Majesty the Empress's nephew, had been pursuing her for at least a month. She could no longer stand his pestering and had finally agreed to attend the banquet at his residence. However, that insufferable fellow, though a gentleman on every other occasion, had been rude to her!

Hmph! It seems like that insufferable fellow who just came to the capital does not know my nickname! He actually dared to drink wine and attempted to kiss me! That kick to his crotch was ample punishment for his impudence! It will certainly make sure he can't court women for at least a month!

Nicole's mood was still really bad! Even though she had already punished that nauseating lecher, her heart still grieved!

Has the great Tulip Family declined so much? Has the great Tulip Family, who was the God of War of the Imperial Army of the Empire, declined until they can be bullied by mere country bumpkins?

Nicole knew that since her father died 6 years ago, her family had lost its last main pillar of support! Even though they were from a Marshal family of the Empire, a family without a single man would be unable to gain a foothold in the Imperial Capital. Her only hope left was her little brother. Unfortunately, that idiot would only bring the family several hundred years of disgrace!

Her brother who was the descendant of the God of War of the Imperial Army had only created trouble in the Imperial Academy with his pathetic strength. Otherwise, he would be spending money along with the other nobles and caused trouble everywhere! He gave everyone headaches and heartaches! At that time, she, who was not even 10 years of age, had to suddenly assume responsibility for the whole family. She had relied on her faith and persistence for so many years. At times, she would think to herself. Why was I not born a boy? If she were a boy, it would justify herself shouldering the responsibility of her family's revival!

While she was recalling past events, the horse suddenly neighed in panic. The carriage driver, Old Mark, shouted out, "Damn! Bandits!"

Rody had not rushed out. Although he was strong, he was not reckless. He observed the other people rushing out as he continued to hide behind the trees. If those guys could get the job done without him showing his face and he could still get paid, why not?

The coachman was stopped by one of his accomplices.

Rody noticed something was not quite right. Wasn't there supposed to be a Grade 3 swordsman? Why was there only one driver? Although the old driver looked quite tough, he had already been brought down the carriage by one of his accomplices.

The unexpected smooth execution of the job made them excited. One of the accomplices thumped on the door of the carriage hard. It was meant to intimidate the passengers of the carriage.

Unexpectedly, the door of the carriage slowly opened.

The first thing that came out was a slim foot with rounded ankles. Its skin was as smooth as snow. Just the foot itself was God's masterpiece. While Rody was still astonished, a slender figure emerged from the carriage.

If Rody was the only one in a daze earlier, everyone would definitely be in a daze right now.

This girl, or rather, this goddess ...! Under the moonlight, her beautiful face was like ivory. Her blonde hair flowed softly and gently. Her eyes had a tranquil blue color. Her small rosy lips smiled subtly.... Wait. Smile?

"Not good!" Rody finally noticed something else was wrong but he could not shout out in time.

The air suddenly swirled fast as everyone looked up to see a 34-meters high tornado. The leaves and branches were all sucked in as the tornado let out a thunderous sound!

"She is a mage!" Star was the first to shout out. As a mage himself, he could understand the real strength of this girl. Star immediately knew, without a doubt, that he was no match for her. Everyone here, including Rody who was still hiding, would not be able to defeat her!

Damn! She is not just abnormally beautiful but also abnormally strong!

Just a smile, without any preparation, could summon a thunderous tornado? This power was that of a mage of at least Grade 6 or higher. In comparison, his strength as a mage was not even worth mentioning.

Star immediately wanted to run! He had learned his

grandfather's motto that death was not heroic!

However, the girl had noticed Star because of his earlier shout.

Her beautiful eyes stared at Star as her lips started to move and said, "You are wrong. I am not a mage."

Finishing this sentence, Nicole gently pointed at Star with her index finger. A lightning bolt shot out from within the tornado. Star only managed to chant the first two words of his protective spell before being hit by the lightning bolt. A blood-curdling scream followed.

Nicole then gently raised her hands. Two people immediately floated up as if they were grabbed by an invisible hand. Nicole looked at them with her mocking eyes before moving her hands again. The two people crashed into each other and soon fell down without making a sound.

The remaining person did not bother trying to fight and ran off immediately. Nicole did not chase. She merely pointed at the head of that person and shot a lightning bolt at him. The poor man's hair all stood up as he fell down.

Rody's mouth was paralyzed and he was stunned. Naturally, he knew that he would not be able to defeat this person. In actual fact, he was no more than a Grade 1 swordsman. Two of his accomplices were also Grade 1 swordsman.

Nicole casually picked up two of the bandits. With something to vent on, her mood had improved. She looked at the coachman sitting on the ground and said, "Alright, Old Mark, you don't have to sit. I know you are alright! Just grab someone and take them to public security tomorrow. They definitely have accomplices. Just leave the rest here. They will remain unconscious for at least a day." After that, she climbed into the carriage and drew back the curtains.

Rody did not want to leave his hiding spot but then he saw the

old man pick up the electrocuted Star and carried him on his back. Star's pitiful clothes were also electrocuted and Star's face was grayish black. Rody saw the old man tie up Star and threw him into the luggage compartment.

Without a choice, Rody tailed the carriage. He was not a person who would abandon a friend. He would definitely try to rescue Star! Not to mention the fact that Star was only here to help Rody earn some money for his tuition fees. He would not have been here if he had not wanted to help Rody.

When Rody was tracking the carriage, he passed by the remaining unconscious person on the ground. He did not forget to grab that man's sword. After all, the unconscious electrocuted fellow did not need it anymore.

Chapter 3: Rich family of the Imperial Capital

The carriage went all the way into the city. Although it was nighttime, because the Imperial Capital was the Empire's largest and most famous commercial center, the gates of this place had never once been closed, except during the warring era.

Rody was tailing the carriage from a distance. He did not dare to stay too close to the carriage. Only God knew how powerful the beautiful girl actually was, and in the event that Rody was discovered, he would end up in prison together with Star.

The carriage passed through the capital's magnificent Victory Square and entered a wide road. Rody had already been in the capital for 2 years but he was still not familiar with this road. He knew that only the most powerful of aristocrats could live here. All the people living here were from rich and powerful families.

The carriage slowly stopped in front of a large mansion. The thick wooden door of the mansion was painted in red giving it an iron-like look. Rody was surprised and almost fell down when he saw the family insignia on the door. He knew what that pattern was! It was the insignia for the Flame Tulip Family!

As a senior student in the Imperial Academy, he was familiar with the Empire's military history. Rody obviously knew what that flame-like tulip insignia represented.

It represented honor and glory! It represented the people's respect and admiration! The Flame Tulip Family. It was the family of the descendants of the first Marshal that helped His Majesty the Emperor found the Empire. In the Empire's 600 years of history, the family has had a total of 14 Marshals. Each and every one of them was an outstanding strategist. They have contributed much to the Empire. Rody remembered his history teacher telling him in a tone of reverence that this family was the God of War's family.

Naturally, Rody only had respect for this family! Never in his life would he have imagined that he would attack the Tulip Family. It looked like there was now a perfect explanation for her ridiculous power. As she was part of the Flame Tulip Family, she must be very powerful. As the carriage slowly passed through the main entrance, the door closed. Rody's heart was now filled with anxiety.

He knew how serious it was to deal with the Tulip Family if they found out that he secretly came here to rescue someone. If they caught him, terrible things would happen. If they found out that a group of people had attacked the Tulip Family, it was certain that this group of people would all be hanged. Any normal person would pack up and run away immediately, as far away as possible.

Rody thought to himself for a moment and sighed. He could not abandon his friend and run away on his own. It was not consistent with his principles of life. Although Rody was not a virtuous person, he would not abandon his family and friends.

Gritting his teeth, Rody entered a small alley next to the mansion. He looked around carefully to make sure that there was no one around before he climbed the walls and jumped into the compound....

Nicole watched her drunk little brother being ferried back. Although she was extremely angry, her face was expressionless. She then called her servants and waved her hand as she coldly said, "Carry him down and let him rest."

Unfortunately, the idiotic future duke was not an obedient person. Being drunk, he could not recognize the person in front of him. His eyes were lax as he laughed and jokingly looked at his sister. He also stretched out his finger and attempted to tease her chin.

In a daze, he mumbled to himself, "Ah, my dear Sarah! I did not see you for a few days and you have already forgotten about me?"

You little fox! Let's see how I shall teach you tonight!" He then stretched his arms and threw himself forward.

Nicole's face turned ghastly pale as she skillfully turned sideways, causing him to stumble into a void. Anger started to show in her eyes as she spoke coldly, "Sarah? You even went to that kind of filthy place?" The pitiful playboy was still not aware of the dangerous situation he was in. Nicole flicked a finger and immediately, a white light shot out and struck the playboy's stomach.

The playboy did not even have the chance to scream as he flew 3 meters away and crashed face first into the ground.

Rody was hiding on top a tree outside the hall and saw the entire scene. He wondered, that if he was the target being shot at, would he be able to dodge it? The answer in his heart made him give out cold sweat.

In fact, Rody did not even dare to breathe heavily at his hiding place as he carefully hid himself. He knew that Star was tied up somewhere in the yard. Although there was nobody in the yard, Rody did not dare rescue his friend while the female mage was still around. He planned to wait until the middle of the night when everybody was asleep before he began his rescue.

They would probably not send Star to jail so late at night. Star should be tied up somewhere like the stables or the firewood store until dawn. As the beautiful female mage should be the proprietress here, her bedroom would most likely be far away from such places. In that case, Rody would be safer when he rescues his friend.

Rody, hiding within the trees and lost in his thoughts, was unaware that the people in the yard had moved away. Star, who was left in the yard earlier, was also carried away by one of the stronger servants.

Although the mosquitoes and ants made Rody feel very

uncomfortable, he persevered until the middle of the night.

From the position of the moon in the sky, Rody guessed that it should be past midnight now and he slowly descended the tree.

He was not familiar with his surroundings, but it so happened he had good grades for architecture in the academy. Hence, from the entire mansion, he could guess the location of the living quarters of the owner, the servants and other areas such as the stable. Rody picked a path and quickly dashed towards the stable.

Rody had never seen such a huge stable before! He had always thought that the stable in the Academy was quite large. However, the stable here was twice as big compared to the Imperial Academy's! It was large enough to fit more than a hundred horses. Rody sighed. A glance at the windows of the stable showed that it did not have any lights on. He quietly pushed the door open and went in.

“Star!” Rody whispered as he walked. He stumbled over the straws and wooden boxes on the ground twice but he still did not dare to light up the place. He had brushed into a lot of straw and horse manure but he could not be bothered. He knew that if he could not find Star by tomorrow, they would be finished!

As soon as Rody reached the end of the stable, he heard light footsteps from across the door. His heart suddenly jumped into his throat as he desperately hid in the biggest horse shed.

The shed was obviously larger than the rest in the stable and particularly well constructed.

On the railings was also a saddle. Naturally, it was a high-quality item. Rody looked back and saw a pair of eyes staring back at him in the dark. Before he could cry out, he realized that it was just a horse.

Even in the dark, Rody could faintly see that this was a very handsome black horse. Its limbs were healthy and strong like

reinforced iron. The horse was watching Rody. Its nose puffed hot air and its hooves were restless. Apparently, Rody disturbed its sleep.

Rody gingerly moved to the side of the horse and muttered, "Dear horse, dear horse. I am not a horse thief. I mean no harm." Rody then touched the horse's mane. He tried to use the skill learned in the Imperial Academy to calm down the horse.

At this time, he heard footsteps gradually approaching. Clearly, someone was heading here.

Rody complained in his heart. In a moment of desperation, he caught sight of a cross-beam above. He quietly leaped up and caught the beam. His legs then latched onto it so that his body was hanging from it.

"Garrus ... you are really not well-behaved," a soft timid voice came from outside the horse shed. Nicole was standing outside the shed as she looked at the restless horse in it. Her father loved horses and this battle horse was used in the battlefield when her father commanded the army.

"Garrus.... Do not flail about.... I'm in a bad mood tonight." Nicole's tone was low and her wonderful voice gave out a sad mood. Her soft voice was capable of breaking the hearts of listeners.

Nicole gently opened the barrier gate of the horse shed and slowly walked in. Rody was so scared that he even stopped breathing. He also dared not move as he feared to make any sound. Nicole reached out and gently stroked the mane and neck of the horse. Under the gentle strokes of its master, the horse soon calmed down.

"Garrus.... I am very sad...." Nicole's words sounded immeasurably aggrieved. "Why... Why do I have to bear all this... I miss my father...." She slowly hugged the horse such that her face was at its neck. "I know. You are also thinking of father as well?"

In the dark, the girl, wearing a white nightgown, continued to whisper and cry softly. Seeing the beautiful blonde Nicole's heartbreaking crying face, the hair at her forehead damp from her tears, Rody's young heart was touched, as if someone was poking it softly with a stick.

God, what kind of abominable matter is this?! To let such a beautiful girl cry in such a pitiful manner is surely a crime.

Nicole wept quietly for a long time before she let go of the horse and gently tidied her hair. She sighed and whispered, "Enough. Garrus, I cried again today and that is wrong. I should live up to my father's expectations ... I need to be brave. I cannot cry!" She gently said, "I know you are unhappy as well. The stable hand told me you are very irritable too. I also know that you do not like being in the stable every day and you also miss father. You also miss the days when he took you out for a ride, do you not?"

"But I really do not know what to do. The family is gradually declining. The Tulips are fading away ... but I am powerless! If I were a boy, I could inherit my father's responsibility. However, that playboy is father's only son. The only male in the family. However, he is ignorant and only tarnishes the name of the family. I feel isolated and helpless!"

Nicole sighed and prayed, "May father's soul in heaven bestow me courage! May the heavens bestow the Tulip Family a ray of hope! May God give me a guide so that I am no longer alone in my fight!"

Just as soon as Nicole's delicate voice ended her prayers, there was a 'plop' sound as a dark figure fell from the sky and in front of Nicole. The man slowly raised his head and turned his dirty face towards Nicole. What truly scared the girl almost to the point of suffocation was his half-black-half-white Yin Yang face.

Chapter 4: Amorous Surprise Attack

“A ghost!”

Nicole gave a short shriek and immediately jumped back. Sparks started jumping out of her fingertips. She was fully on the alert with the sudden appearance of the man on the ground.

Rody's face was full of dust. His back ached and his whole body felt numb. Damn! I hope my back is not broken.

Rody felt wronged! It was not his fault!

If anyone was to be blamed, it was the girl's fault!

Did she not know she was wearing a nightgown?

The aristocratic girl was wearing a nightgown. The upper front part was undone and left really loose! The worst part was that Rody was hanging on to the beam right above her. As the gown did not cover her entire chest, he could see everything there.

Our swordsman was a young virgin. He had never before experienced such temptation. Especially since the girl had earlier cried and messed up her clothes even more. Even if Rody was a saint, after accidentally seeing the girl's exposed chest, he would falter. His surprise at the sight made him loosen his grip, resulting in his fall.

“Who are you!?” Nicole screamed.

Even if she were more powerful, she was after all still just a young girl. The sudden appearance of a mysterious man in the middle of the night in a dark room had gripped her heart with fear. Not to mention the fact that the man looked menacing with a Yin Yang face.

Rody's mind was a bit dizzy. He could not help but stare at Nicole's chest. His eyes blurred.

Nicole immediately understood the meaning of his gaze along

with the realization that he was above her earlier and her robes were loose. It was obvious that while she had been unaware, he had been looking at her exposed chest and thus had violated her modesty.

Nicole felt embarrassed and angry at the same time. With rage, she pointed at the other party. The surrounding air flow abruptly became violent. Nicole's blonde hair started to flutter. Her face was gloomy and her eyes glowed.

Looking at the noble girl's index finger pointing at him, the drowsy Rody was jolted wide awake. He was truly scared out of his wits when he saw the lightning bolt shooting out from her finger. In desperation, he let out a cry and struck his palm at her neck.

His mind was clear that he only had one chance! Against such a powerful magician, he only had hope in close quarters combat.

However, he did not use his full strength. This was because the girl was too beautiful and he could not bear to hurt her.

Unfortunately, he was not fast enough. Just as Rody's hand was about to hit her, before he could even touch her neck, he felt like his chest was hit by a sledgehammer. His body felt like it was falling apart.

Nicole saw her lightning bolt hit the strange man squarely in the chest but at the same time, she also felt a severe pain at her neck as she lost consciousness.

Rody felt pain throughout his body and he could barely stand. Fortunately, his attack struck the girl accurately and she should be out cold for a while.

Rody knew his attack worked because he had previously used the same technique on a sturdy fellow while sparring in class. That fellow was unconscious for a full hour.

This poor girl. Hopefully, she is not injured.

Rody leaned over to observe the girl. His mouth felt dry the

moment he saw her. The girl was indeed unconscious as her whole body was limp on the floor. The hem of her night robe was gently raised and it exposed her legs and ankles. Rody's eyes moved towards her chest as her nightrobe barely covered her bosom. As he was much closer to her now, the sight became clearer.

Rody was about to run. However, he had a sudden strange thought. Such a beautiful and defenseless girl. Rody swallowed hard and mumbled to himself, "If I kiss her now, nobody would know right?"

With his heart taking over, Rody involuntarily leaned down to take advantage of Nicole. His eyes grew wide and his breathing also got heavier. His heart felt like it would jump out of his mouth.

In a daze, Rody's lips touched a soft object. It had a trace of sweetness. That feeling almost stopped his heart.

Unfortunately, the young virgin boy did not have the chance to savor the experience of his first kiss further as her eyes suddenly opened in close proximity.

Nicole had drowsily felt someone pressing into her face and opened her eyes. What she saw almost scared her to death as she saw that guy pressing his Yin Yang face onto hers. That guy was even kissing her!

The noble girl bit her teeth down in reflex.

Rody screamed and backed away. He reached out to touch his mouth but was immediately aware of the salty taste. His mouth had been bitten and blood flowed into his mouth. Rody could even feel the teeth marks on his upper lip. Luckily, Nicole, in a panic, had not given her full effort. Otherwise, Rody would be the first warrior ever who got his lips bitten off during his first kiss.

"Bastard!" Nicole's face was red as if it was bleeding. Her expression was full of panic, anger, and humiliation.

Damn it! This bastard actually dared to take advantage of me. It

doesn't matter if he is a person or a ghost! He should die 10,000 times! (In her distressed state, she did not think about whether it was even possible for a ghost to die again, much less 10,000 times.)

The air velocity became more rapid and a mass of air concentrated into a tornado with faint sounds of thunder. Nicole exclaimed, "DIE!"

A white light appeared from Nicole's index finger and struck Rody's body.

Rody had expected to be hurled flying by the strike. However, after being hit by the white light this time, he was not thrown off. His whole body was jolted as though it was hit by an invisible hammer. After that, he could not move a muscle and his entire body felt numb.

The white light that shot towards Rody formed into a ring. Rody was encircled inside the ring. Nicole waved her hand and Rody flew, crashing hard into the wall. With another wave, Rody hit the other side of the wall.

The wooden sheds were damaged by the impact from his body. The solid wood almost broke Rody's back. A few small pieces of wood punctured his clothes and his body. Rody felt extreme pain and had cold sweat but he could not even scream.

Nicole's fingers waved again. This time, the air gripped Rody and pinched him hard like an invisible hand before bashing him around the walls a little more. Although Rody was tough, he could not withstand the constant beating and had started to run out of breath.

Fortunately, Nicole finally stopped. With a gentle flick, she crashed Rody onto the ground face first. His nose bled.

Rody was hurt so badly he had actually fainted. However, he woke up again when he fell to the ground. Although his nose was broken, a different kind of ache appeared. The blood from his nose

and tears in his eyes all started to flow. However, he did not dare to move and continued to lie down quietly on the floor. If the scary woman knew that he had not died, she might give him a dozen more beatings! Rody was not an idiot. He knew the principle of not fighting when the odds are against him!

Nicole was breathless as her chest heaved. She gnashed her teeth and asked, "Who are you?!" As she spoke, her finger was still pointing towards Rody on the ground. Damn it. When she remembered about this ghost man's frivolousness, Nicole could not wait to tear him into pieces.

However, the person on the ground did not give any reaction. Was he dead? Or did he faint after being hit? Nicole carefully walked two steps forward, alert and vigilant. Her wonderful eyes did not relax as she looked at the guy on the ground.

Suddenly, Rody's hands were raised. A handful of mixed straw and dust flew towards Nicole's face. Although Nicole was a master magician, she did not have much hands-on fighting experience. Not to mention that a noble lady would not have witnessed this type of tactic before.

Hastily, she screamed and closed her eyes even before she could jump out of the way.

The poor girl who despite her strength, did not have any combat experience. For a magician or a warrior, closing your eyes was a fatal mistake! Although Rody was just a student, he was a commoner and had a lot of experience with fighting in the streets. You might say that he was very skillful.

The girl screamed and closed her eyes but she could still feel the dust and straw on her body. In the heat of the moment, she moaned about dirtying her beautiful face and nightgown but her thoughts could not progress much further.

Rody's palm once again struck her neck and Nicole collapsed.

This time, Rody's strike was heavier. His bleeding lips and the bruises in his body gave him plenty of lessons!

Rody carefully walked around Nicole and gently prodded her with his foot to make sure she had truly fainted. Rody was finally relieved.

However, he tensed up. Two people had just been fighting here and had caused some ruckus. Only God knew whether the bodyguards and servants were roused.

Rody lost his desire for intimacy. He needed to leave quickly.

At this time, there was a voice outside the horse shed.

“Wonderful! Wonderful! Truly beautiful!”

That person, clapping his hands, leisurely walked in alone.

Chapter 5: The Crafty Playboy

The man was dressed in a black robe with an expensive leather belt around his waist and a little cloth bag on his back. Although it was dark, his golden hair gleamed brightly.

“Who are you?” Rody was nervous and on guard. His body was taut, all ready to rush forward.

“Relax!” The man smiled. He did not look old. “In fact, I am the one who should be asking that. Who are you?” His voice was slow. “This is my home!”

“Your home?” Rody was a bit confused.

“Of course!” The man smiled and moved two steps closer. The moonlight finally shone on his face, revealing a handsome face. He had sapphire-like eyes and blond hair as bright as the sun.

“In fact, that horse behind you is my horse. And this woman on the floor is my sister,” he whispered and snorted. “But don't you worry. I bear no malice. In fact, I would like to thank you!”

“Thank me?” Rody, surprised, looked at him warily. He never had a good opinion of these nobles.

“Yes, thank you!” The young man laughed. “I have grown weary of this place for far too long. In fact, I was already planning to escape from this place. In other words, run away from home! However, I didn't expect my sister to come to the stable at such a late hour. Fortunately, you have helped me with this problem. Hehe!”

“You.... How long have you been here?” Rody asked cautiously. He really could not figure out what the young noble wanted.

“Not long, I just happened to see the entire thing. Heh, I really did not expect that you, a Grade 2 swordsman at best, could actually defeat my sister! It seems you are not as dumb as you look!” The young man said with a devious smile. His voice had that

standard aristocratic tone. Pretentious.

“What do you want to do now? Call the guards or arrest me?” Rody took two steps forward, hoping to get closer to him.

"Hey!" The young man immediately took two steps back. "Stop! I mean no harm! In fact, I am grateful to you and I do not want to fight with you! I cannot defeat you! I am not even a Grade 1 swordsman. I object to using force to solve problems!" He waved his hands during the confusion and smiled. "That is why you do not need to worry about me."

He spread out his hands to motion that he had no ill intention. He then went to the wall, removed the saddle from the railing and walked towards the door.

“You... You are just leaving like this?” Rody stared at him incredulously.

My God! I just knocked out the man's sister and he did not even spare a glance? He even wants to leave? Is he mad?

"Why not?" The youngster frowned, "I am tired of this aristocratic life. The heir of the Tulip Family? Go to hell! Why should I partake in centuries-old traditions? I am not interested! I am going to leave! Do you know what I like? Freedom! Do you know the meaning of freedom? Let me tell you! Whether you are rich or poor, without freedom it means nothing! I am an artist! What I need is freedom! Not family rights and honor! I am going to the docks! There is a merchant ship going to sea tonight! They are going to the East! Dear God! Beautiful East! That is a real dreamer's paradise! It can grant my desire to be free!"

“Have you ever seen the ocean? The blue ocean, when it is calm, is the most beautiful thing in the world. However, when it is angry, it would swallow up everything! Heavens! How miraculous! I am going to go and have a wonderful life!” He laughed happily.

Rody felt like he was looking at a lunatic and could not utter a

single word.

Fortunately, he is just crazy, not here to find fault with me.

Just as Rody thought like that, the madman stopped to look at him and then looked at Nicole lying on the ground.

"Ah... I can't go off like this... Although she always bullied me and nags a lot, she is still my sister. Also, she is beautiful and unconscious. I cannot just leave her here in case you have any bad intentions." The young man shook his head seriously.

Rody tensed up immediately.

"Put it this way, I am sorry to have to do this but I have no choice. After all, if I just leave you here with her, I will not have peace of mind."

"You... What do you want to do?" Rody looked at him tensely as he slowed down his pace. He spoke softly, "Can you beat me?"

"Fight? Why fight? I hate violence!" The young man smiled cunningly. "I never liked to use violence! I like to use my brain! The brain! Do you understand?"

"What are you talking about?"

The young man looked at him with pity and sighed, "Enough. You better lie down now!" Then he suddenly slipped his fingers into his mouth and whistled.

Rody immediately tried to check what was wrong but before he could react, Garrus, the horse behind him, had reared up after hearing the whistle. Its two front hooves rose up and kicked Rody's body.

Rody was flung away, without any chance to scream. His body crashed into the horse shed, broke a hole in the plank, and ended up outside.

The young man seemed relaxed. He shrugged as he looked at the hole in the wall. When he saw that Rody was really unconscious on

the ground, he smiled in satisfaction.

“See, I don’t even need to do anything! Great. Now you two stay there and have a good nap.”

He did not grab the reins for Garrus but went to the next stable for another horse.

“Garrus! I am sorry but I cannot take you! I know you want to leave this forsaken place as both you and I are alike. We believe in freedom. But I still cannot take you along! I am going sailing! I will leave my horse behind at the dock. I may need to spend a year or more sailing in the ocean, but you cannot stay on the boat for so long.” The young man laughed at himself. “Why am I even talking to you? You are just a horse.”

After that, he waved at Nicole with a laugh, "Goodbye my dear sister, your little brother has troubled you a lot. I will go and write my own life story! Take care, my sister! Also, wish me luck!"

He got on the horse and kicked its belly softly, leaving the area with a laugh.

As he disappeared into the darkness, he could not help but shout loudly.

“Freedom! I am coming!”

Many years later, Seth would understand a gospel truth. It is that the world will always make people feel helpless. No matter how you want to escape, God will not let you succeed. In the end, you will be bound to fate. There is no escape.

“Destiny. Destiny is a mischievous bastard. You may think it does not exist. However, it would jump out all of a sudden, kick you in the arse, laugh at you twice, before disappearing again.”

Years later, that would be known as a famous quote from an elegant scholar named Seth.

In brief, Seth was totally lost in his joy of a successful escape and

was looking forward to embracing freedom.

On the other hand, the young virgin swordsman would be facing a lot of trouble.

Chapter 6: Nicole's Decision

Rody woke up aching all over his body. This was especially true for the places where he had been kicked by the horse. It felt like some of his bones were broken.

He could not even move a single finger.

Rody immediately realized that he was being restrained with magic! The thought of this dampened his hopes, like a pot of cold water being poured over him.

Sure enough, he immediately saw Nicole's beautiful face.

However, her face was seething with anger and hatred.

Nicole sat on the chair as she glared angrily at Rody who was lying on the floor. She was sitting on an animal skin chair, wrapped in a large robe. When she saw Rody's lips, she noticed the bite marks on it. She could not help but blush. This bastard actually dared to do it!

This bashful feeling only lasted for a moment and slowly turned to disgust as she looked at Rody's Yin Yang face.

"Listen! I will be asking you questions! You better answer honestly, otherwise, you will regret being born to this world!" Nicole lowered her voice and gnashed her teeth.

Rody could not speak nor nod. He could only look at Nicole blankly.

"If you agree, blink!" Nicole continued, "I do not like flowery words. The less you say the better. When I ask you questions, you are to answer 'yes' or 'no'. Blink if you want to say 'yes' and if the answer is 'no', do not blink! Understand?"

Rody blinked.

"Good!" Seeing Rody complying, Nicole's anger calmed down a little bit. "Then I shall ask you the first question. Do you want to

die?”

Rody immediately straightened himself, opened his eyes wide and stared. He was afraid he might accidentally blink. If so, he would be dead.

“Since you do not want to die, why did you break into my home so late at night? What do you want? Did someone order you to come?”

Rody continued to stare and did not blink.

Nicole frowned and shouted. “You better be honest! Do not try to be crafty! No one ordered you, but you dared to sneak in here? Yet you say you are not lying?”

God is my witness. Rody had been staring for a long time. Unfortunately, his eyes could not withstand the dryness and he blinked twice involuntarily. Nicole got furious immediately. She flicked her fingers and a bright flame shot towards him. Rody could not even scream when his scalp caught fire. Even his eyebrows were almost charred.

Fortunately, Nicole had no intention of seriously harming him and the small flame soon died out. Even then, Rody's scalp was already burned in some places. The loss of some hair was certain.

At that moment, the beautiful girl no longer looked pleasant. If Rody could speak, he would definitely curse her ancestors!

“You bastard! Don't you dare to be dishonest!” Nicole spoke coldly, “I will put you in your place. Don't you dare to take advantage of” When she said those words, Nicole's face turned red again.

At that moment, Rody strained to keep his eyes open wide, trying hard not to blink accidentally.

“I am going to continue to ask you questions! You listen carefully! Think before you answer!” Nicole's face was stern.

Rody blinked once.

Nicole sneered and lifted her finger. As she moved her hands, Rody felt the tension on his body loosen. The magical bindings were now undone.

“Now I am going to ask you questions! Why did you break into my house at night?”

Rody's eyes turned around and he was just about to fabricate a reason when Nicole's face turned pitch black. She shot another flame out. Fortunately, Rody was able to dodge it this time. Even then, the flame managed to burn a hole in his pants.

“You had better be honest! I forgot to warn you! I am a senior magician! I can read facial expressions! I can tell if you are lying! So you better not make me angry!” Nicole said sternly.

Rody was shocked. Now, not daring to cover up anymore, he told the story about how they attacked the carriage, how he wanted to save his companion and how he secretly sneaked into her house.

Nicole nodded. “Well, now tell me why did you attack my carriage?”

Rody smiled wryly. “I also do not know! However, I suspect that we have got the wrong target. According to the man in the bar, our target should have a Grade 3 swordsman guard. On the other hand, you only had a stable hand.”

Nicole pondered for a moment and finally said, “I see. Coincidentally, I happened to be down that path tonight. That was why you idiots dared to ambush me. Right?!”

Rody hurriedly exclaimed, “I would not dare think of attacking you. Oh God! To attack the Tulip Family! I don't have so many heads!”

Nicole slightly taunted in a whisper, “Tulip Family? So you actually know our family name!”

Rody sighed, “Of course I know the Imperial Army’s God of War’s family. I certainly do!”

Nicole nodded. Rody’s words were like music to her ears, so her tone eased a little and she continued to ask, “So, who are you? What do you do?”

Rody was about to compose a series of nonsense but after looking at Nicole’s stare, he did not dare tell lies. “Miss, I really do not want to lie but my identity is special. If I tell you, my future is gone.”

“Oh?” With a strange smile, Nicole asked, “Well then, who are you?”

“No! I cannot tell!” Rody shook his head, “Unless you can promise not to send me to public security! I am willing to be punished for tonight’s actions.”

“Punishment!” Nicole suddenly flared up, “You can’t repent enough for your actions tonight, even if you die a thousand times! Don't you dare bargain with me! Did you forget your... discourtesy to me!”

Seeing that Nicole was about to act violently, Rody decided to step back and prepare himself.

Fortunately, Nicole controlled her temper and calmed down. She relented and declared, “Fine! I will not send you to public security. I will punish you personally! Now. Tell me your name and who you are!”

“My name is Rody. I am a student at the Imperial Academy. A commoner student,” Rody replied with a blush. After all, for a student of the Imperial Academy to go outside the city at night to commit robbery, it was not glorious at all.

“An Imperial Academy’s student?” exclaimed Nicole with surprise.

“Yes. I am under training.” While straightening his posture, Rody

said, "I am going to participate in the swordplay exam next month. After that, I will officially become a warrior!"

Nicole did not seem interested in this topic, as her face sank, "Well! Since you are also an Imperial Academy student, then you tell me...!" Her voice became gloomy and her words became slower. "Do you know my brother Seth? Tell me! Where has he gone?"

Glumly, Rody replied, "I do not know your brother. Or rather, I did not know him until tonight!"

"That means you saw him tonight?" Nicole immediately sat down on her chair. "Do you know where he went?"

Rody nodded. "I know, he seemed to have told me."

Nicole rose from her chair. "Tell me where he went!"

Rody's eyes twitched and whispered, "I can tell you but on one condition!"

Nicole, startled, demanded angrily, "You dare bargain with me?!"

Rody quickly lowered his head and whispered, "I am not asking this for myself but for my friend! In fact, he was also caught tonight! This was also because of me. He wanted to help me raise my tuition fees. That was why he did this! I just wish to ask you to forgive him. I am willing to bear all punishments!"

Nicole was surprised. This boy was younger than her only by a year or two. Yet he had unexpected courage. In fact, she was very angry with that night's incident. The thought of being molested by this Yin Yang faced boy made her furious and unable to control her rage. However, when she calmed down, Nicole realized that this little thief was just a child. He was barely as old as her brother who was two years younger than her.

Yet this boy, although he looked timid and fearful, was brave enough to accept the responsibility for the incident. For the safety of his friend, he was willing to accept all punishment.

On the other hand, her brother was crafty and had never shown a man's courage. Not even once! That infuriating person actually left behind a letter and ran away from home. He abandoned the family's glory and responsibilities!

Nicole could not help but sigh helplessly, "Rody. I promise not to punish your friend. I won't even pursue this matter anymore. But you have to tell me where my little brother went to!"

Rody immediately related the conversation between him and her brother. Before he could finish, Nicole growled angrily, "That idiot! He... He actually left behind his family and threw away his responsibilities! Left traveling and went abroad! He just left like that?! He... he...!"

Nicole became more and more agitated as she spoke. She almost fainted from anger.

Rody warily looked at Nicole without saying a word. Only God knew if he were to say the wrong thing, chances were that this beautiful girl might harm him out of anger.

Fortunately, Nicole's anger passed quickly. She walked back and forth a few steps before clapping and summoning a few guards.

Nicole coldly issued her orders.

"In view of tonight's security flaw, Senior Guard Malin... you are immediately suspended! Tomorrow, you will go back to the army! Even a low-levelled warrior was able to sneak into my house. I can only describe you, a senior guard, as a bungling oaf!" Nicole's voice was cold and imposing. One of the guards turned pale and started to sweat. He must be that unlucky guard.

Nicole did not look at him but continued, "Tie this guy up and throw him into the firewood store together with the other guy I caught. I heard that the kitchen is short of an odd-job worker. Send that guy I caught to the kitchen! As for this guy..." Nicole looked at Rody coldly, "From tomorrow onwards, he will be my

groom!"

Rody argued loudly, "But you promised to release my friend! Also... I... still wish to return to the Academy.."

Nicole coldly shouted, "Shut up! I am already incensed tonight! You said you would accept any punishment. This is your punishment! Tomorrow onwards you will serve as my servant!"

"Alright," Rody thought for a moment. Either way, things had already ended in failure. Even if he were to go back to the Academy, he would not have any money to pay the tuition fees and would not be able to study anyway. However, he still needed to fight for his friend, "But you promised to release my friend!"

Nicole raised her head. "So what?"

"You did not keep your word!" Rody said, angrily.

Nicole gently smiled as she looked at Rody. "I am a woman! Don't you know? Not keeping promises is a woman's privilege!"

Rody was speechless. After all, he was young and did not have any experience dealing with women.

Nicole thought for a while and then instructed another guard, "Also go to the Academy and inform the Academy that my brother has gone to recuperate for health reasons. He has been sent to another province by the family to rest and has to stop school! Approximately... ah, three months. He will be back in three months time!"

As she said that, she gave Rody a meaningful look.

Rody could not help but shudder.

Chapter 7: Abnormal Family

That night was the most difficult night Rody had ever experienced so far. He was certain there would be more tough nights ahead because he was captured by Nicole.

After finishing her interrogation, Nicole returned to her room and did not let anyone enter. Throughout the night, the servants could hear angry smashing sounds and the sounds of glassware breaking coming from the room. When the servants came in to clean the room the next day, they found that all the furniture except the bed had been destroyed in Nicole's anger.

For Rody, that night, he was preoccupied with a fear of the unknown future.

He was only 18 years old this year. In the past 18 years, he had worked hard towards qualifying as an official warrior. After his father's death, he had sold off all of his heritage (his father didn't leave him much anyway), enrolled as a student of the Imperial Academy, and had been working hard to survive. But that night, his whole world had changed. All his life's goals suddenly disappeared. He could no longer return to the academy as he did not have enough money. Besides that, he was also captured by that noble girl. All this was because of that despicable playboy! He actually dared to get me into such trouble! The next time he sees that playboy, Rody would not listen to a single word he says and would immediately break his nose.

Although he was locked inside the firewood store, the night passed by fairly well. Other than the incident of that senior guard secretly kicking him for his sneaking into the house, he was actually given bread to eat. It seemed that this God of War family was not as bad as the other noble families.

Star was sleeping beside Rody like a corpse. No matter how Rody shouted or called out to him, there was no response.

When it was dawn, Rody finally realized he was about to start a new phase of his life.

Rody had a sudden thought. Fortunately, I was not sent to public security and thrown into prison. Compared to prison, being captured by a beautiful girl is incomparably better. Oh, that girl is really beautiful.

After dawn, Rody finally fell asleep. Unfortunately, in but a few moments, the door to the store suddenly opened. Some sturdy servants barged in and hauled Rody away without so much as giving him an explanation.

While he was yelling he was dragged into a large room with windows and curtains. There was also a small door in the room. He did not know what was inside that small door.

Before Rody could react, the large man with a beard immediately pulled his pants down. Rody was taken by surprise. He screamed and tried to kick. Unfortunately, his body was hurting all over, especially where he was kicked by the horse. When he lifted his leg, the pain subsided. The fellows in front were seemingly not bothered. In quick order, they stripped his clothes off.

Rody was now very frightened. He had heard that among the nobles, there were some with queer tastes, including those that prefer handsome little boys. However, he was so ugly. Would they be interested in him as well?

He was a young man and a big boy after all. But now, he was so frightened he was about to faint.

Fortunately, the men did not do anything after stripping him and just pushed him into a room behind the door. They all left after closing the door.

It was very misty inside the room. In the middle, there was a large barrel taller than Rody. Hot mist rose in a cloud above the barrel.

Rody was immediately relieved as he understood that they wanted him to take a bath. Rejoicing, Rody jumped into the barrel.

Just as soon as he thought that he had escaped disaster, the small door opened, or rather, it was kicked open.

Rody looked and almost cried out.

A giant, at least 2 meters tall, walked in. His bare upper body bulged with muscles and he had a ferocious face. His eyes stared at Rody as if sizing him up. Rody, frightened, quickly retreated back into the barrel.

However, the giant walked over and reached out with his giant hand. As if grasping a chicken by the neck, the giant effortlessly carried Rody. He carefully looked at Rody's naked body before grinning and throwing him back into the barrel.

With a splash, Rody's head hit the bottom of the barrel and he choked on some water. Before he could even gasp in protest, the giant grabbed his feet and pulled him up.

As the giant held Rody with one hand, the other one suddenly took out a brush from somewhere. God! That was a brush for horses!

The giant obviously regarded Rody as a horse. Wetting the brush with a bit of water, he brushed up Rody's body.

His movements were very meticulous and there was not a single part of Rody's body that was missed. He was also very careful in cleaning the dirt from Rody's body. Rody felt like a pig about to be slaughtered as he was being cleaned by the giant. Honestly, it was sheer torture!

This was mostly because the giant did not know how to be gentle, especially when washing certain parts of the body.

The giant washed Rody's body for half an hour. Finally, he poured a bucket of water over Rody's body and looked at him with satisfaction. At that moment, Rody's body was red and clean like a

newborn baby.

The giant nodded before dropping his brush and leaving without sparing Rody another glance.

Rody immediately started cursing. He started cursing everybody, from the giant to the Tulip Family to his teachers in the Imperial Academy.

What shitty teacher! What shitty history! What shitty Tulip Family! It is more like the world's most abnormal family ever!

His kept cursing, unaware that after being washed by the giant, his injuries from that night seemed to have recovered. That included the injuries from being kicked by the horse. Now he seemed to no longer feel any pain in his body.

At this time, Rody suddenly heard a voice, "Have you finished cursing? When you are done, come out of the room and put on the set of clothes on the chair outside the room."

Rody immediately shivered. That was the voice of the noble lady! He did not dare to offend that woman!

As he stepped out of the room, he saw the new suit outside the room. Rody reached out to it and touched the cloth. It had a very soft feeling. Anyway, he could not differentiate between high-quality cloth and low-quality cloth. Rody put on the clothes. The underwear was a bit tight but the other clothes fit quite well. As he had never worn such beautiful clothing before, he was also a bit excited.

Based on his memory, only the noble children in the Academy wore this type of clothing.

Feeling nervous and uneasy, Rody opened the door and walked out of the room. In the courtyard, Nicole who was dressed in a white robe coldly looked at him as she sat on her chair.

Just one glance at Nicole had Rody stunned.

Although it was not the first time he saw Nicole, it was much clearer and more vivid during the day. Nicole's golden hair seemed to shine in the sun. She had deep blue eyes that seemed to be bottomless and soft glossy white skin. She was so beautiful that she did not seem real! A goddess! Her figure exuded an aura of an inviolable noble.

"I am going to die!" Rody's heart silently spoke. If I have to be beside her every day, I would not live long. Last night, why did I not...? Even if she bit off my entire mouth, it would have been worth it!

While Rody was thus confused Nicole asked, "Have you washed up?"

Rody was still dumbstruck as he kept looking at Nicole. However, he still managed to nod. When Nicole noticed his staring eyes, her face turned red and then her face sank. "If you continue to look at me like that, I will dig out your eyes!"

Rody was shocked and immediately lowered his head. However, his eyes could not help but secretly look at Nicole.

Every man would experience such a period, and especially so for teenagers. There would always be a phase where he lusts and admires women. Rody who was a young boy would also have this blind admiration and impulse. Not to mention the fact that Nicole was an exceptional beauty.

"Enough!" Nicole's delicate voice called out. Although the tone was cold it was also delicate. Therefore, it did not sound cold but instead had a certain charm to it. She continued to speak, "Now, I will see if you are qualified to be a Tulip Family's... servant!"

Rody's entire attention was focused on Nicole's body, so he failed to notice what was wrong with her words, or what she was getting at. Also, it did not occur to him why a servant would need to be tested for skills. Let alone testing his skills, if Nicole had wanted him to kill, she merely needed to point her finger at him and he

would immediately rush out.

Seeing Rody's silence, Nicole nodded and a middle-aged man came out from behind her.

Rody's attention was entirely on Nicole since he entered the courtyard. Even if it was not a person standing behind her but a train, Rody would still fail to see it.

However, Rody started to look at this middle-aged man seriously the moment that man walked in front of Rody.

The man was wearing gray clothes. However, most of the impression came from his silver white hair that was bundled up. The man squinted watching Rody. His hands were behind him and he showed a trace of a smile.

Although the man was just casually standing there, Rody had a strange feeling that this man was not a person but a wall!

Chapter 8: Sword Master

Rody had a strange feeling that the man in front of him was a warrior! Not just that, he was also a swordsman! He could not tell why he had that feeling but he was extremely certain of it.

The middle-aged man seemed interested in Rody and smiled faintly. "Alright. I heard that you are a swordsman. First, we shall test your sword skills. Do you have a sword?"

His words made Rody's face turn red. He remembered the sword he picked up yesterday. He immediately straightened his chest and loudly said, "I am not an official swordsman but I will be one! I... I had my own sword but last night... they were confiscated!"

The middle-aged man nodded before looking back at Nicole. Nicole did not speak but she nodded. The middle-aged man then shouted, "Alright then. Somebody, please return the young warrior's sword back to him."

It would seem that the middle-aged man's ranking was not low. Immediately, a servant ran off and came back moments later with the sword Rody took last night.

"This is your sword?" The middle-aged man smiled. He seemed to be looking casually at the rust on the sword.

Honestly speaking, the sword was actually quite good. Not everyone could carry weapons in the streets in the Empire. Although it looked a bit old, the sword was still sharp. Anyway, as the sword was given by a hired hand in the bar, its quality can be considered acceptable.

However, Rody's face could not help but turn red. His youthful arrogance did not allow him to lose face in front of Nicole. He straightened himself and said, "Yes, this is my sword. I have a better sword but I do not have it now!"

The middle-aged man nodded and pondered for a moment before

saying, “Well then, let me see your sword skills. I am going to attack you and we shall see how long you can hold out.”

“Okay!” Rody immediately held up his weapon in readiness and agreed loudly. In the presence of such a beauty, if she wished, this virgin youngster would slay a dragon let alone fight this man.

The middle-aged man bent down towards the chair and picked up a broadsword. He gave Rody a glance and said, “Prepare yourself. I am coming!”

Rody concentrated on the middle-aged man, braced himself and assumed a defensive stance.

“From the left!” The middle-aged man cried out and slashed at Rody. The sword was frighteningly fast. Rody only sensed a white flash coming towards his left. All he could do was rely on his instincts to block the attack.

‘Wham!’ Rody felt like he was kicked by a galloping horse. He staggered back a few steps to find his balance. The middle-aged man did not wait for him to recover and shouted again, “Right!” The sword slashed down again.

Without time to adjust his stance, Rody hastily held the hilt with both arms to support it. The power of the strike was greater this time. Rody backed to the wall before stopping. His face was already red.

The middle-aged man stopped his attack and smiled. “Not bad. Your physical strength is passable and your reaction is quite good. However, your defensive posture is too tight. Not flexible enough!”

Rody took a deep breath and stepped forward. He loudly said, “Just now I allowed you to attack me while I defended. Now it is my turn!”

The middle-aged man smiled, “You?”

What was Rody trying to say? Rody realized that Nicole, sitting on the chair, was smiling mockingly at him.

Rody looked down only to find his sword cracked in 2 places. Rody's facial expression changed immediately. This sword was worth a few silver coins! Although it was inferior to Rody's own sword, when he was done with it, he was going to sell it for some living expenses!

Distressed, he gently touched the cracked blade only for it to break into several pieces and fall clanking to the ground. All that was left was the sword hilt on Rody's hands.

Rody's face turned white and he felt extremely dejected.

The middle-aged man faintly smiled and replaced the sword on the chair. He turned to Nicole and laughed. "He is not bad. At his age, to be able to take two strikes from me is quite rare!"

Rody put on a long face, "Not bad? You broke my sword in two strikes!"

Nicole gave Rody a glance and said, "Silence! Who do you think you are? Do you think you could actually defeat a Master? Master Autumn is the Imperial Capital's top swordsman! He is publicly acknowledged as the most probable candidate for being the swordsman that would unsheathe the Sacred Sword."

"Master Autumn?" Rody exclaimed. "You are Master Autumn!!"

His face flushed, the astonished young man exclaimed, "You are the chief swordsman of the Royal Court, Master Autumn! You are acknowledged by the public as the one who would unsheathe the Sacred Sword!"

Rody stared at the middle-aged master swordsman in admiration. Master Autumn was indeed a legendary figure, truly almost like those heroes in fairy tales. For a young swordsman like him, there was no better person to worship!

The frown on Rody's face was immediately swept away!

He was surprised that Master Autumn had tested him and that he, Rody, was even able to block two strikes! The opponent was a

master swordsman! In fact, during next year's Swordsman Assembly, if Master Autumn could really unsheathe the Sacred Sword, he would become the first person to do so for the last few centuries. It was the kind of legend that was born once every few centuries.

Master Autumn gave an indifferent smile and said, "Miss Nicole. I have done as promised. This man is really good. If I am not wrong, he is about to reach Grade 2 swordsman level. Compared... Compared to your little brother, he is much stronger." At this moment, Master Autumn assumed a strange expression.

Nicole nodded. Suddenly she stood up and walked towards Master Autumn. She leaned towards him and whispered into his ear.

After listening to her words, Master Autumn frowned and shook his head. "No! I have said this before. Unless he is from the Tulip Family, I will not accept anybody else!"

Nicole looked at Master Autumn's firm expression and gently sighed, "Fine then."

Master Autumn thought for a while and smiled. "However, I can give him some guidance. I will come again tomorrow afternoon."

Rody was still looking stupidly at Nicole and Master Autumn. Actually, his eyes were looking more towards Nicole's body. Nicole glared at him and scolded, "Fool! Quickly thank Master Autumn! Master Autumn has promised to teach you swordsmanship tomorrow!"

Rody did not react as his heart continued to run wild. Why are her eyes so beautiful even when she is glaring?

Nicole stamped her feet and shouted loudly, "Rody!"

Rody was shocked and immediately woke up from his stupor. Master Autumn repeated his sentence, "Remember, I will come to this yard tomorrow at noon."

After that, the Master turned around and left.

Nicole gave Rody a harsh glance before calling out to a servant, "Take him away and let him put on that stuff we prepared last night!"

Nicole turned and walked to the east side of the courtyard. Two servants quickly went to the courtyard, propped up Rody, and followed from behind.

Rody finally recovered a few moments later. He finally shouted, "Oh my God! Master Autumn is teaching me swordsmanship! Master Autumn is teaching me swordsmanship!"

"Shut up, you idiot!" Nicole turned back and shouted.

Rody was so extremely excited he struggled free from the two servants, ran in front, and shouted. "Just now Master Autumn said he would teach me swordsmanship. Is it true? Is it true?"

"Shut up!" Nicole lost her patience and shouted again. "It seems that I need to teach you a lesson!" Nicole then raised her head, pointed her finger at Rody and raised it ever so slightly. Without knowing what happened, Rody suddenly flew into the air and crashed sprawling down onto the ground.

"First things first. The next time you talk to me, do not forget to add the word 'Master'," Nicole coldly looked at him.

She then turned and continued to walk forward. The two servants hastily grabbed Rody and followed.

Although Rody was a little bit confused from his fall, he was still foolishly saying in a low voice, "Oh my God, Master Autumn is teaching me swordsmanship."

Nicole angrily walked in front.

She herself did not know why she was so angry! She was not a bad-tempered person but every time she saw this person with the Yin Yang face, she started to feel angry. His every move would also

make her angry. That was especially true when he was stupidly looking at her. Every time she remembered the previous night, Nicole wished she could grab a sword and cut him into a thousand pieces.

Rody followed Nicole to what seemed like an old two-storey building. The servants had stopped at a distance much earlier, not daring to approach.

Nicole looked at Rody and said, "Follow me up."

Rody looked at the rundown building that was in disrepair. The walls were covered with withered vines and trees. Two towering trees also shaded the place from the sun, giving the entire area an eerie feeling.

Rody's started to feel a sense of unease.

Chapter 9: God's Language

Rody followed Nicole into the small building. The first floor had tables and chairs but these were haphazardly placed. There were containers that Rody did not know the purpose of. There were small jars and vases. There were also shelves packed with neatly arranged books. Glancing at it, Rody could immediately see that these books were really old. They were antique sheepskin books.

Just these books were worth a lot of money!

Even creepier was the human skeleton standing at the corner of the room. The eerie white bones seemed to radiate a faint glow in the darkened room. Rody involuntarily walked towards it. To his surprise, there was a red mark on the skull that he could not understand.

Rody could not help but want to touch the skeleton when his eyes noticed some bottles on an iron shelf. The bottles were made of silver and there were labels on it. Unfortunately, he could not understand the words on it. It was not the text commonly used in the entire empire.

“Do not touch those bottles!” Nicole’s cold voice called out from behind him.

Rody immediately withdrew his hands that were reaching out to a bottle.

Nicole gave Rody a look. Although her face was cold, her tone softened. “Some of these things in the bottles must not be touched. For example, the second bottle in front of you. If you were not careful and spilled it onto your hands, even if it was just a little bit, you would die. Your entire arm would immediately corrode and only leave behind bones!”

Rody was shocked. “Are these all poisons?”

Nicole glared at him, saying, “No! These are all just used for

experiments!”

Rody opened his mouth and wanted to say something but Nicole did not give him the opportunity to ask anymore questions and loudly told him, “Follow me upstairs, quick!”

Nicole turned and walked upstairs. Rody quickly followed.

The second floor was like a big open space. From the railings, one could see the hall on the first floor. There were more things on the second floor compared to the first. It had an old desk that had lost its color along with a strange instrument on top of it. The shelves on the wall were larger and stored 3 times more books compared to the one on the first floor. Rody had not seen this many antique books in his entire life! In the corner, there was also a durable but rusty iron safe. The amount of rust on that thing showed that it was even older than the combined ages of Rody and Nicole.

In the middle was a large table-like platform with more things scattered on it. There were some jars and bottles and some of them had fallen on the table.

Rody stepped forward to find a few pieces of old parchment. The messy handwriting on them showed that they were probably some kind of test notes or written records.

Suddenly, a line on the parchment attracted Rody’s interest.

'Lack of high-pressure utensils... Failure... Empire Year XXX. Dandong.'

“Dandong!” Rody could not help but exclaimed, “My God! This is the wise sage Dandong’s notes!!”

Nicole looked at Rody lightly and asked, “What is the fuss about?”

“What’s the fuss?” Rody cried out. “Dandong’s notes! Do you know how much Dandong’s autograph is worth in the antique market?”

Nicole frowned, “What about it? All these things here were left behind by the sage Dandong! The shelves placed over there contains Dandong’s test notes. Also, these instruments are relics that Dandong had left behind. During those years, this was Dandong’s laboratory!”

The great sage's laboratory?

Rody stared with his mouth wide open.

“But... Dandong’s lab... In your home... Here?”

Nicole said indifferently, “That is because one of my ancestors was Dandong’s apprentice. Grandmaster Dandong lived in our home in his old age and this was his workplace!”

"All these... are the relics of Grandmaster Dandong's wisdom!" Rody excitedly exhaled. The sage Dandong was one of the idols he worshiped as he grew up. Without Dandong's reform, civilians like him would not be able to enter the Imperial Academy. Even 10-year-old children in the empire knew that Dandong brought miracles to the empire!

“That is indeed true! These are really the relics of Grandmaster Dandong’s wisdom! Also, all these were inherited by the ancestors of our family,” Nicole’s tone was also somewhat sad. “Unfortunately, this is also our family’s tragedy! For centuries, none of my ancestors could understand the wisdom from these notes. 3 of my ancestors studied the Grandmaster’s notes here in their later years until they died of mental exhaustion. My father also died in this laboratory!”

“Why? Was the Grandmaster’s wisdom too difficult and profound?”

Nicole smiled gently. It was a fairly odd smile that showed misery.

"No idea. We do not know what Dandong's wisdom was even about. This is because no one could understand his most important

notes. The most important wisdom in Dandong's notes is not in the common text of our Empire or any language on any continent. We do not even know what language it is!" Nicole's tone was full of mockery. "There are times we even suspect that the language Dandong used was God's language! My ancestors went through a variety of ancient books and still could not decipher this language!"

"God's language?" Rody was surprised. "Is there really God in this world?"

Unexpectedly this time Nicole did not glare at him when she angrily said, "Only a genius would know!" This was because generations of her family were fascinated by 'God's language' and had futilely worked hard. This had cost the family a lot of time and even claimed their lives. It became a heavy burden for the Tulip Family. As a result, Nicole had no respect for God.

Rody was surprised and could not help but caress the table and the ancient sheepskin notes gently. He cautiously asked, "Can I take a look at it?"

Nicole shrugged, "As you wish. This is just the replica I used to study. The original has already been hidden away."

Rody immediately grabbed the sheepskin notes and spread them out.

Sure enough, the first page of the sheepskin notes was written in the Empire's common language. However, the backs of the notes were written in a different language. The characters were also extremely complex. Each stroke looked like it was delicately cut with a chisel. The structure of the texts was also delicate. Each word looked like square blocks and they also had a special pattern. It was definitely not in any language that Rody could understand.

Although there were occasionally some designs and drawings, one look would tell you that these were blueprints. Unfortunately, the words written around them were all in 'God's language'.

Nicole ignored Rody who was frowning while staring blankly at the sheepskin. Instead, she walked to the iron cupboard at the corner and chanted something. The iron cabinet then opened. Rody immediately turned to look at it. Although he was a warrior, he was also interested in its operation method. He knew that Nicole used a locking spell. It was a kind of magical technique, a kind of memory magic. It was as if the cabinet could remember the person's voice and only if the sound matched would it unlock. This technique was also invented by Grandmaster Dandong 200 years ago.

With Nicole's back blocking Rody's view, she pulled out a narrow box from the cabinet and then closed the door of the iron safe.

Nicole held the box with both hands as if it was a priceless treasure. She carefully placed it on the table before opening it.

"You don't have to look at that anymore. My father looked at it for 2 decades while I have looked at it for 7 years. We couldn't understand a thing. Do you think that you can understand it?" Nicole coldly commented.

"What did you take out? What is that?" Rody was curious.

Nicole glared at him and waved her sleeves. Rody was immediately thrown back like a sandbag being thrown out and he hit the corner.

Nicole looked at Rody coldly and said, "You must have forgotten! I said that when you and I converse, you must address me as 'Master'. Now, come over here! Stop playing dead! I know you are a sturdy person. A fall like that wouldn't even injure you!"

Rody mumbled to himself as he stood up. He did not say a single word but secretly cursed. Why is she so ferocious?! One day, I will... urgh... Even when she is fierce, why is she so beautiful?! Sigh...

With these thoughts in mind, Rody walked to the table. When he

saw what was in the box, he took a deep breath and almost screamed!

Chapter 10: Nicole's Secret

If you saw a live face right in front of you, how would you feel? Perhaps you might say 'What is that?'

But what if that face had no head, no body and no hair? Just the face?

My god! It looked like a face mask but at the same time, it was not!

Even Rody who was quite brave was so frightened he almost screamed. That was because the face mask looked like an actual face being kept in the box. The most important thing was that the face was clearly alive.

He, or rather, it, was actually laughing at Rody. Rody almost fainted when it, noticing Rody was frightened, winked and made a funny face.

Looking at his gaping mouth, Nicole's eyes revealed a trace of mockery as she smiled. "Why? Are you scared?"

Rody exhaled deeply and could not help taking two steps back. He exclaimed softly, "What... What is this? My God! Why... is it alive?"

Nicole mockingly replied, "Scared? Aren't you supposed to be very brave?"

As she said that, she pinched the two sides of the face in the box and then lifted it to show the face to Rody who almost fainted when he saw that the face grimaced as it was pinched.

Rody opened his eyes wide and did not dare to say anything. He stared at the object in Nicole's hands.

It seemed somewhat transparent. The color of the skin was not much different from humans but it was quite shiny. Its eyes, nose and other facial features were very realistic.

“This is a priceless treasure of the family! Unfortunately, it is not very useful. It was from the first-generation ancestors of the Tulip Family; that is, the one that helped found the empire, Duke Rudolph,” Nicole carefully held the face in her palms.

“That... What on earth is that?”

“A mask! A magic mask with a life of its own!” Nicole replied.

“Magic!?” Rody exclaimed loudly.

In the Empire, magic was popular. Several hundred years ago, both magic and sorcery were popular techniques. However, 200 years ago a great magician appeared, the Great Sage Dandong. Not only was he a great magician then but also a great inventor. He improved on and also developed a lot of different magic techniques, to the extent that the upper echelons of the Empire also supported Dandong. Publicity-wise or strategy-wise, magicians of that time were always ahead. 200 years later, magic techniques in the Empire had shown major progress. However, sorcery techniques had declined gradually.

You could no longer find many sorcerers in the whole empire.

Only in the north of the Empire, across the Thunder Straits of Roland continent, was sorcery culture able to progress.

“This mask is a magical treasure! An ancient artifact you know? It was made from the skin of the Elven race.”

“Elven race’s skin?”

The Elven race was already only a name in history. Those strange creatures were extinct thousands of years ago. Now, whether it was in the Empire or the northern Roland continent, these strange creatures could no longer be seen.

“Using someone’s skin to make something! Can you still call it an artifact? It is too evil!” Rody exclaimed.

“No! Although it was made from a person's skin, it is not a

product of evil! Before his death, a famous sorcerer of the Elven race, due to his pious beliefs, had cut off his face to make this magical product. The devout believer called this magical object the 'God's Smile'. It is said that the Elven race's great sorcerer was about 600 years old when he died. His magic powers were already unfathomable."

Nicole narrated the history of this object in a delicate voice. Rody did not say anything but his heart whispered... My God. A 600-year-old's peeled skin. Is that interesting? I for one, do not want to touch this.

Nicole saw Rody's expression change. Although he had not said anything, based on his expression, she could guess his thoughts. She lightly said, "The Elven race is one of the most mystical races since time immemorial. Although the mask was made from skin, when the great sorcerer was dying, his body was close to crystallization. So rather than to say that the mask was made out of his skin, it is more appropriate to say that the mask was made out of magic crystals."

"Wait a minute..." It suddenly dawned on Rody. "You..." The moment his mouth said 'you' Nicole gave him a glare. The frightened Rody quickly changed his words, "Mas...ter... Why did you show this to me? If it is truly precious, what has it got to do with me?"

Nicole smiled. In Rody's eyes, it was like the smile of a wolf looking at a chicken.

"'God's Smile is an artifact. There are many uses for this artifact. However, after the sorcerer's death, a lot of its mystical uses were not handed down. But just knowing the two known uses of the mask is already fantastic. The first is that the person who wears this mask can change his face into anything, like a chameleon. He can change it to a person he had previously seen or anything that he imagines."

“That is quite interesting...” Rody was curious.

Nicole quietly smiled. “However, that is just one of the uses of this mask. The other is the one I am more interested in. The second use is that a sorcerer can give this mask a specific face. After that, the mask can be worn on a person to show that specified face... also...” Nicole’s voice gradually turned into a mocking tone, “Only the sorcerer can remove the mask. If the sorcerer does not remove the mask, that person will be wearing the mask for life! No matter what the wearer does, it will not come off!”

Rody heard Nicole's words and subconsciously took a few steps back. "You... You want me to... wear this thing?"

Nicole smiled and her eyes flashed. Moving closer step by step, her hands took the 'God's Smile' purposefully. "That day when you attacked me, your companions said that I am a magician. I said he was wrong. I am not a magician. Today, let me tell you. I am a sorceress!"

Chapter 11: Why Did It Turn Out Like this?

“You...” Rody suppressed his surprised feeling. He was not surprised that Nicole was a magician or a sorcerer. For him, there was no difference if Nicole was a magician or a sorcerer but now that Nicole was holding that thing known as ‘God’s Smile’ the situation was entirely different.

That was because only sorcerers could use this magical artifact. Magicians could not use it.

Rody suddenly had a thought and gulped, “You... want me to wear this mask?”

Nicole smiled and slowly approached Rody.

Rody abruptly shouted out, "No! I don't want to wear it! I don't want to wear the face of a several-hundred-years-old man!"

He stepped back and waved frantically.

Nicole raised her head. “You don’t want to? This is a magical artifact you know?! A miracle of sorcery! Don’t you want to change your face? Do you want to remain as a little guy for the rest of your life? Remain as a junior swordsman and a poor guy struggling to survive in lower society? Do you want to live your life with that black-and-white face forever?”

Nicole’s last words stirred Rody’s thoughts a little but he immediately shook his head. “I am not a fool! You wanting me to wear this must be because you have some sort of devious intention in mind! I...”

“Hmph!” Nicole snorted in disapproval before coldly saying, “You no longer have a choice! Do not forget! I am your master! You will do whatever I command!”

“No!” Rody said resolutely. He had lost all interest in beauty and temptation. His instincts told him to escape!

Rody moved quickly. Not bothering to take the stairs, he ran to the railings on the second floor and tried to jump across it.

Nicole responded faster than him. She coldly grunted, stared at Rody in contempt, and shouted, “Stop!”

She lifted her hands and Rody’s body suddenly stopped as if he was a puppet that had lost its strings. His body froze and fell from the second floor.

His head hit the ground and he fainted before he could make a sound.

Nicole calmly walked down the stairs and arrived beside Rody. She sighed in relief when she saw that Rody had only fainted and did not have any injuries. After that, she gently said, “Don’t blame me for this! Who asked you to suddenly appear that night and knock me out! As a result, that bastard ran away! Since you are the one who started this mess, I can only trouble you. Hmph! Do you know how many people would want to be a part of the Tulip Family and yet do not have that chance?”

The young girl slowly leaned down and turned over Rody’s face. She took a deep breath. Her hands were holding the ‘God’s Smile’ that was glowing with a strange light. She slowly covered Rody’s face with the mask.

Nicole then sat with her legs crossed. She folded her arms and closed her eyes.

The air around her started to stir. Nicole suddenly opened her eyes. Her lips moved lightly as she sang the incantation.

“Bang!” The ‘God’s Smile’ on Rody’s face started to glow brighter until it became a dazzling golden light. Nicole’s expression turned serious and she continued to chant the incantation. The brilliant light became even more magnificent before it gradually began to dim and eventually disappeared.

Nicole was out of breath. Her forehead was sweating and her face

was pale.

It seemed that the ‘artifact’ called ‘God’s Smile’ was not so easy to use.

Nicole quickly looked at Rody without giving herself time to rest. One glance was enough to tell. Rody’s black birthmark was now completely gone but... but...

It was quiet outside the old, dilapidated building. The sunlight was blocked by the lush trees. This tranquil setting was suddenly shattered by a loud scream.

“Arghh!!!”

It was a scream that came from inside the building.

It was a scream of anger, disappointment, frustration and other sorts of emotional anguish!

“Why! Why did it turn out like this!!”

Rody did not know how long he had slept. He felt like he had been walking a huge distance in darkness.

Everything around him was empty. There was no sense of direction nor light. Rody even suspected that he was dead. However, he was still able to think and was conscious. It was strange.

What did that girl do to me?

Where in hell is this place?

“Anyone there?”

Rody tried to shout but found that he was unable to. It was exactly like how people in dreams would feel. Sometimes, they just wanted to cry out desperately but may find that they did not have a voice.

The only thing he could do was move his legs to aimlessly walk forward.

Am I really dead? Does this happen to dead people? The Academy's Theology teacher said that good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell. Is this heaven or hell? Shit. Don't tell me dead people can only wander around aimlessly? God, what do I do if I get hungry? How long do I need to walk?

Everything was pitch black and it was no different from having his eyes closed. Either way, he still could not see anything.

If only there was some light. I wish I have a candle. Rody could not help but think.

As soon as the thought flashed through his mind, a light suddenly appeared. A large candlestick with a lighted candle appeared nearby.

Unfortunately, the flame was too small and could only illuminate the small area around it.

Rody looked around the candle but found nothing. It was just open space. He looked below the candle and was startled. There was no ground. Everything, himself included, was standing on empty space as if it was normal.

"What's going on?" Rody thought to himself. "It will be great if there is more light."

As if on cue, the candlestick immediately transformed into a row of candles, brightly lighting up the place.

However, it was of no use. Although the flames were stronger and lit up a larger space, there was nothing around it. It was still just empty space.

Rody was stunned.

From the day before till then, he had encountered too many strange things. For a young man like him, these encounters had already exceeded his mental capacity.

Although he was a brave man, in an environment where there

was absolutely nothing, he could not be certain as to whether he was dead or alive. This feeling almost made him crazy.

“Argh!” Rody cried in insanity but even his voice failed.

Cut through this damn darkness!

A sword magically appeared in Rody’s hands. Rody gradually started to go berserk. His hands held the hilt. His body trembled. With all of his might, Rody suddenly cleaved!!

A sound rang out from the void. The sound gradually came closer and louder until it seemed to be next to Rody.

The void in front suddenly cracked open. Rody’s sword had actually managed to cleave through the void.

The crack seemed to give out a dazzling light as Rody screamed and fainted.

Chapter 12: Rabbit Ears, Donkey Ears

Rody woke up once again. His body felt soft and limp as if someone had removed all of his bones. He struggled to sit up only to find that he had been lying down on a big soft bed with white sheets as soft as silk. It was a luxury Rody had never enjoyed before in his entire life.

The room he was in was 10 times larger than his single room in the dorms of the Imperial Academy. Although the layout of the room was simple, it had a luxurious setting. The large windows were open and the thick red curtains were also drawn back. The sun shone in to light up the room while a soft breeze caressed Rody's face.

Rody's first thought was that he was still alive and that the previous instance in darkness was just a dream.

His second thought was: It's great to be alive!

Nicole stood at the window, her back facing Rody, deep in her thoughts.

Rody supported his body to sit up but found that he did not have enough strength. He could not help but grunt.

Nicole immediately turned around and looked at Rody.

In Nicole's eyes, there was a hint of concern, a tinge of apology, and also a bit of frustration. She spoke softly in a gentle tone that Rody had never heard before, "Have you woke up?"

To wake up with the sun shining brightly on a soft clean bed and an astounding beauty gently asking you, 'Have you woken up?'.

Was there anything that was more joyful than that in this world?

Rody's heart could not help but tremble gently before he asked, "What happened to me?" After that, he remembered himself fainting and what Nicole had said before that. He nervously asked

again, “What did you do to me?”

Nicole gave him an odd expression and her eyebrows moved slightly. However, she did not speak. She merely picked up a mirror from a small table and slowly went to the bed.

Surprised, Rody took the mirror and looked at it for a moment. He immediately cried out in alarm.

“Ahh!”

He instinctively threw the mirror aside as he quickly touched his own face.

If there were anyone else in the room, it would be a strange sight to them.

Rody was on the bed trying to tear off his own face.

His face, his original face that was half-black-half-white, was no longer there.

His skin had turned normal but it was not his face! It was the face of the young man he met that night! The face of that hateful, cunning man who whistled and made the horse kick him!

However, this was not the main reason Rody had cried out in alarm.

He had already faintly guessed that Nicole had wanted him to wear the ‘God's Smile’ to change his appearance. That was why he was not surprised with his altered appearance, although he had wondered why Nicole wanted to change his appearance into her brother's.

It was not that Rody did not want to think about the real reason. He had no mood to do it anymore.

Although his appearance had changed and he now had a white face, lake-blue eyes, a prominent nose and thin lips that looked identical to that cunning playboy, there was one thing that was definitely different!

That was Rody's ears!

Basically, they were not human ears!

It was a pair of rabbit ears! No, it should be a pair of donkey ears!

The ears were sharp and long. It was longer than his head!

A person's head with ears that were as long as a rabbit's! It was outright comical!

However, Rody was in no mood to think of whether it was comical or not!

He shouted and pulled his ears hard. He pulled it until it was red and painful. He pulled his ears until his tears even streamed down his face.

The burning pain made Rody realize, in dismay, that these were truly his ears and that he was not dreaming!

Rody lost his wits and started to scream wildly. His voice was filled with panic.

Nicole quickly sat down and stretched out her hands, "Stop! Don't pull anymore! You..."

Rody frantically grabbed Nicole's hands and shouted, "You! You! What did you do?! What did you do to me?!" His voice was full of anger and despair.

"I... I don't know! I really don't know! I..." Nicole seemed to have lost her sense of speech as she defended herself. However, she could not break free of Rody's hands! His strength was frightening. It was as if her hands were being held by a pair of pliers. Nicole's hands started to feel painful.

Nicole's eyes glimmered faintly as she quietly said, "Sleep! Sleep!" Her eyes looked straight into Rody's eyes. Rody's eyes were drawn to hers before it started to slack and lose focus as the eyelids drooped. Rody's grip loosened and he finally let go of Nicole's hands before he fell back onto the bed with his eyes closed.

Nicole quickly stood up and looked at Rody with his ridiculously long ears. Her face was pale and she was dumbstruck.

God, why did it turn out like this?

That mask!

Why did 'God's Smile' give him such an appearance? Her spell should not have been wrong! She did everything according to the Great Sage Dandong's notes and had also pictured her younger brother Seth's appearance first. After that, she had read the incantation without saying a single thing incorrectly!

So why did Rody's face turn into her younger brother's face together with those long ears?

That pair of ears were definitely not human ears! They were like rabbit ears! There were no humans in this world with that kind of ears! Unless they had elven ancestry then their ears might be...?

Wait!

It then dawned on Nicole.

The 'God's Smile' was created by a master elven sorcerer! Even the mask itself was made of the Elven sorcerer's skin! That would mean that only the Elven race could use this mask! If a human used it, it would result in this strange appearance? Just like a half-human-half-elf! They would have a human's face with long elven ears!

My God!

She quickly stood up and ran out of the room towards the laboratory.

She was going to read through the records and see if there were any relevant records in those ancient notes.

That being said, Nicole started to have doubts about those ancient notes. According to it, Nicole, who had used her sorcery to make Rody wear the mask, should also be able to remove it with

her sorcery too. However, when Rody was unconscious, Nicole had tried many times to take it off without success. Her sorcery seemed to have lost its effect. That damned 'God's Smile' seemed to have grown onto Rody's face.

There must be a way! There must be a way!

As she continued to think, she ran crazily, oblivious to the tearing of her skirt caused by the branches and also the two flower pots she had accidentally knocked down.

Chapter 13: Young Master's Gorgeous Servant

Nicole moaned in anguish and threw the ancient notes onto the table. She had not expected this to happen!

She thought she had found a solution to an intractable problem. It was obviously not the case.

That little bastard Seth, although he wasn't much, he was still the future heir to the Tulip Family! The bearer of the family name!

More importantly, Seth still had 6 months before he graduates from the Imperial Academy. He must graduate! He must pass the examination so that His Majesty the Emperor can confer the position of heir to the Tulip Family to become the next generation Tulip Family Duke.

However, as of this moment, he had run away!

Although he had always been queer in his ways, his actions this time was really outrageous.

That guy actually boarded a ship and headed out to the ocean! Even if they moved out now, even if they were faster, they would not be able to find Seth.

But what about us here? What about the Imperial Academy? What about graduation?

Don't graduate?

What a joke! One of the identities of the Tulip Family was that in these past hundreds of years in the Empire, there was not a single successor to the Tulip Family that did not graduate from the Imperial Academy. Their family had always been the pride of the Empire! If this generation's family member ran away and did not take the examination, and did not inherit the title of Duke from His Majesty, it would not only be extremely shameful. It would

also be a disaster for the family.

Seth would lose the qualifications to inherit the title and the Tulip Family would lose the status of a Dukedom!

It was extremely frightening!

In Nicole's desperation, she came up with this fraud. It just so happened that this boy broke into her home and, in a way, it was also his fault that Seth managed to escape. Also, he seemed quite suitable! From his behavior, he was a decent young man. Although he made a mistake, his character was still acceptable. His swordsmanship was also decent.

In actual fact, this was just Nicole reassuring herself. Rody was not particularly good but he still managed to obtain excellent results. On the other hand, Seth could only be referred to as 'useless'.

Moreover, Rody was a commoner and an unimportant person. He could be easily controlled. He was a little bigger and a little stronger than Seth. She planned to keep Seth out of sight for 3 months. In this 3 months, people's memory of Seth's physique would not be as clear as it used to be and she could also try and make Rody lose weight.

3 months later, Rody would be able to take the examination while pretending to be Seth using 'God's Smile'. After 3 months of training, Rody should be able to pass the examination. Even Master Autumn acknowledged his potential! Anyway, even if Rody was not very strong, he would at least be stronger than Seth right?

Once Rody passed the examination and graduate, he would obtain the Emperor's official recognition and inherit the title of a Duke. That way, he could help the Tulip Family get out of this crisis.

Although that was a bit unfair to Rody, who asked him to attack the carriage!? To even intrude into her home at night and even do

that thing! It was his own fault to participate in crime! After the situation is resolved, maybe she could use her connections to get him into the Imperial Army. That would give him a much better future. It would be an easier life than staying at the Imperial Academy, graduating and having a mediocre life thereafter. In the Imperial Army, a warrior could be easily promoted if they had outstanding military achievements.

But those ears!

Nicole almost tore up all the ancient notes in front of her in anger. However, she resisted her anger, held up the notes and slowly read it again word by word.

If only she could understand those words written by the Great Sage Dandong. Perhaps the Great Sage Dandong had some other notes about this 'God's Smile'. Great Sage Dandong, who had stayed in here in his old age, must have studied it thoroughly. Actually, he had studied such stuff his entire life.

Rody who was under Nicole's sleeping spell only woke up 12 hours later.

The first thing he did when he woke up was to touch his ears. When he touched his long and pointed ears, his heart was filled with despair. However, he was not willing to give up. He picked up the mirror that was left on the bed beside him and looked at his own face.

"#&*\$!!" Rody could not help but shout out a string of curses. Then he groaned and tossed the mirror back onto the bed.

What should I do now?

Although his original face had a large birthmark, making it a Yin Yang face, it was not as terrible as his current appearance.

A person may have large birthmarks. It was a normal thing. Although Rody was ridiculed for his ugly appearance, only the noble students did it. The poor commoner students did not because

the birthmark was natural! It was given to him by his parents. It was fate. He himself had no say in it! Although it was ugly, it was still the face of a person!

This time, that would not be the case any longer.

Having a large birthmark was still human but who in the world had such long rabbit ears?

Originally, he was a little ugly but at least he was still human! Now, he would probably be classified as a monster!

Rody sighed for a moment and stood up from the bed.

There was nobody in the room so Rody decided to look around.

Based on the layout of the room, it was obvious that this bedroom belonged to a master of the house. The design and decoration seemed very tasteful. Even the intricate carvings of the large bed he slept on seemed extremely exquisite. On the table were two vases. It was evident that they were works of art and worth a lot of money. There was also an oil painting. Although Rody did not have any art sense, he could tell with a glance that it was not some cheap stuff from the market.

“Where is this?” Rody asked himself. He then thought to himself: Could it be that I slept in Miss Nicole’s room? But then he immediately, with certainty, shot down that attractive idea. Impossible.

He still had his common sense with him.

However, this room was not like a servant’s room or a guest room...

“Could it be...” Rody frowned.

At this time, someone knocked on the door.

Rody was shocked and quickly rushed into bed. He picked up the clothes on the bed by instinct and wrapped his head. He was now already a monster and did not want anyone else to see his long

ears!

The large wooden hemlock door was gently opened. A graceful figure came in. Although she was holding a silver pot, her pace was still very graceful.

She looked inside and seeing Rody, head wrapped with clothes, she smiled. There was a strange gaze in her eyes but it soon vanished.

Although this girl was in a maid's clothing, it could not conceal her innate beauty and radiance. Her soft blue hair was like the gentle waves of the ocean. She also had a pretty face that made people want to shower her with affection. Especially her beautiful eyes. Just a glance of her eyes was mesmerizing.

Honestly, Rody was already gaping and his heart was saying: Goodness gracious, the high-class families are really different. Even their servants are so beautiful.

The servant girl felt Rody staring at her and blushed. She then put the silver pot down and said, "Young Master, what evil plans are you thinking of now?"

"Young Master?" Rody's eyes opened wide.

"Ah..." The girl acted like she made a mistake and stuck out her tongue and blushing said, "I... I still do not dare to call you Seth... I will still call you... Young Master."

"Seth?" Rody's eyes were still wide.

"Enough!" The young girl blushed as she stamped her feet in a bit of anger. "I came to wash your face but you are bullying me. I will leave!" The girl's face became a little solemn.

Seeing that Rody did not speak further, the young girl walked around him and said, "Young Master, you are being mischievous again. You always liked to do strange things. Why did you wrap your head with clothes? Is it perhaps a kind of art?" Saying that she stretched out her hand to take away the clothes on Rody's

head.

“Ah!!” Rody screamed and leaned back.

Chapter 14: The Masked Person (1)

Normally, Rody would have been happy to have a beautiful girl reach out to him and take off his clothes. Even if these clothes were only wrapped around his head. However, if the clothes were hiding his long ears, it was another matter entirely.

Rody cried out in alarm. He immediately moved backwards and ended up falling off the bed.

“Ah! Young Master Seth!” The young girl looked at Rody’s eyes and was surprised to see his panic-stricken face.

“You, you..... don’t come any closer!” Rody scrambled to sit up and stretched his hands in front to keep her away.

The young girl suppressed her smile and asked, “What happened to you?” She then stretched out her hands to pull Rody up.

While she tried to pull him, Rody quickly rolled under the bed. After that, he blurted out with a muffled voice, “Don't come here! I, I....”

The girl frowned, “What do you mean you, you, I, I? Young Master Seth, what’s the matter with you?”

“He is asking you not to approach him!” A cold voice sounded from the door. The girl looked back and saw Nicole standing at the door. Nicole’s chin was slightly raised as she looked coldly at the girl.

The young girl quickly lowered her head and quietly called out, “Miss Nicole!”

Nicole waved lightly and said, “That’s enough. Angel, you can leave the room now. I will deal with this.”

Without hesitation, the young maid put down the silver pot, hastily bowed and left the room. She had been with the Tulip Family for a while now and knew that although the Young Master

was the heir to the family, she also knew that at home, Nicole was the one with the most authority.

Nicole was not on very good terms with the maid. She resented her brother for his shortcomings so much that she even resented the people around him.

Rody made sure Angel had left the room before popping his head out from under the bed. He stared at Nicole and said angrily, “You have finally arrived? You... What do I do now? Quickly turn me back into my old self!”

Nicole was slightly apologetic and gently said, “That... I can’t do that for the moment but I am looking for a way. There is also one other matter.”

“What other useless matter could there possibly be? I have such preposterous ears! How can I go out and meet people?” Rody almost roared.

Nicole’s face was grim as she scolded, “To even dare to use this tone when you speak with me! Have you forgotten your place?!” She paused. “Although there is a bit of a problem right now, do you think you have the right to shout at me? Do not forget! Your sins and mistakes! I... I could justifiably punish you any way I wish. Yet you dare to yell at me?”

Rody was speechless. True. His current status was a ‘servant’. Where in the world could a servant scold his master? Moreover, aside from the attack on the Tulip Family, he could also be charged with ‘indecent assault’. With these crimes, any kind of punishment the Tulip Family could dish out would not be considered excessive.

“Come out now!” Nicole coldly shouted.

Sure enough, Rody crawled out from under the bed and obediently stood in front of Nicole.

Seeing Rody’s aggrieved face, Nicole lightly said, “You had better be well-behaved and don’t make that face as if the heavens have

wronged you. If you are more earnest, I will find a way to make your ears turn normal again. If you do not listen to me... Hmm... Since I can turn you into a donkey, giving you a pig's snout would not be a difficult task!”

These words worked extremely well. Rody immediately stood straight obediently and no longer showed any dissatisfaction on his face. At the very least, he showed no dissatisfaction on the surface.

It was no joke! At the very least, he could use a hat to hide his long ears. However, if his nose were to also be turned into a pig's snout, that would really be disastrous. From then on, he would need to hide his face wherever he went.

“That is better!” Nicole looked satisfied as she noticed Rody's improvement in behavior. She then lightly said, “Now, dress up and follow me! Have you forgotten? You are supposed to meet with Master Autumn this afternoon. Not everyone can have the opportunity to be taught by Master Autumn!”

This was the only news that could lift Rody's mood.

After all, Rody was also a swordsman. To be taught by Master Autumn was the dream of every young novice swordsman.

Rody's unhappiness was considerably assuaged and, without further delay, he followed Nicole out of the room.

On the way, Rody further calmed down as his emotions stabilized. His brain started prompting him to ask questions.

“Miss Nicole... I... Just now the room I was sleeping in was...”

“My little brother's room!”

“That... my current face... and also that maid earlier. Why did she call me Young Master?”

Nicole stopped and looked back at Rody before replying lightly, “Your questions will have an answer. However, it is best that you

be quiet for now! When it is time for you to know, I will tell you!”

Rody immediately shut his mouth. After all, his current status was a ‘servant’.

Rody thought that he was going directly to see Master Autumn at the yard. He only realized Nicole was not taking him there when he arrived at the rundown two-story building. His first thought was to run!

Why is it this place again?

He looked at Nicole with vigilant eyes. Yesterday, this woman here made him put on some kind of ‘God’s Smile’. That ended with him growing a pair of long ears. Today, she brought him here again. What did she want now?

When Rody hesitated to follow Nicole in, Nicole coldly asked, “Why did you stop walking?”

Rody looked at the building and then at Nicole’s face. Although he did not say anything, the meaning was clear.

“Didn’t you say... we are going to see Master Autumn?” Rody said with a woeful face.

“Idiot,” Nicole lightly said, “How can you meet Master Autumn with your current appearance? I do not want others to know about this secret.”

As Rody was still thinking, Nicole impatiently grabbed his arm and dragged him into the small building.

A secret that we do not want others to know about? My current appearance?

Rody’s mind suddenly had an idea.

Oh my God! This woman does not want to do that right?

Isn’t that absurd?

Chapter 15: The Masked Person (2)

Without allowing Rody's imagination to run wild, Nicole pulled him into the first floor of the small building.

Something silver-like was on the front table. It gave out a soft light inside the darkened room.

Rody understood what it was at a glance. It was a mask! A silver mask!

Nicole stood at the side and went straight to the point. "Put it on!"

Rody hesitated. The previous time, he had worn that 'God's Smile' that literally ruined his life. What was he going to wear this time? The last time, he obtained rabbit ears. What about this time? Would he really end up with a pig's snout?

Nicole looked at the panicking boy and could not help but laugh. She reassured him, "Don't worry! This is just an ordinary mask!"

"But... Why should I wear this mask?"

This woman had done so much to change his face and now she wanted him to cover his face? Was there something wrong?

Nicole was too lazy to explain to him and coldly said, "Because this is an order."

Rody sighed as he thought: As expected.

He somewhat guessed Nicole's idea but..... Isn't that idea crazy?

Nicole looked pleased with Rody's appearance after he put on the mask. Rody was tall and slender. The mask was also very exquisite, except for the unpleasant looking long ears and his long fluttering hair, it gave a confident and mysterious impression.

The design of the mask was ingenious as Rody, wearing it, did not feel that it was particularly suffocating. He made a wry smile and asked, "What do we do about the ears?"

He was very hopeful that Nicole would change his ears back but was soon disappointed.

Nicole took out two objects and gave them to Rody. They were often used by the nobles in winter to cover their ears and keep them warm.

Nicole gave Rody two large earmuffs and quietly told him, "Fold your ears and then cover them with these."

Fortunately, although the ears were long, they were also soft. Rody felt a little bit of pain when he folded the ears and then covered it with the earmuffs. However, Rody did not dare to object further.

Nicole went to Rody's side and carefully straightened out his hair in such a way that the hair would cover his ears. That way, it would be impossible to see anything.

Rody could feel Nicole's soft hand stroking his head and could also smell the girl's fragrance. If it was not because of the light ache in his ears, everything would have been very satisfying. He even had a faint hope of extending this moment forever.

Nicole looked at Rody with a satisfied expression and said, "Alright."

She did not realize that her tone had become softer.

In fact, Nicole was not a cold, unsympathetic person; whether it was at home or in the Imperial Capital. Rather than bad-tempered, Nicole was more of a gentle person. It was just that there were too many incidents in the past two days. She was attacked on the way home and was violated by Rody in the middle of the night. More importantly, her family's heir ran away from home. The young girl had to bear all the family burdens and was exhausted. As a result, she was easily irritated.

Other than that day when Nicole was furious about Rody's indecent acts, Nicole did not treat the boy that was two years

younger than her with much prejudice.

She actually admired this big boy as he had dared to sneak into her home, regardless of his own safety, to rescue a friend. Besides that, Master Autumn also appreciated his talent in swordplay. On the other hand, she had hoped her brother had such strength in character. At the very least, she would not need to carry the family's burden on her shoulders.

As for that time when Rody stole a kiss while she was unconscious...urgh...she just treated him as a young and naive child. Nicole was aware of her innate beauty and that she had already captivated countless nobles in the Imperial Capital. After all, Rody was also a young man.

Rody was still immersed in this moment of bliss when his hand was released by Nicole. It turned out that while he was in this dazed state, she had already led him to the yard from yesterday.

When he arrived, Master Autumn was already standing in the yard.

Master Autumn was dressed in gray clothes like before. His signature long white hair flowed down from both sides. This time, instead of the broadsword used for soldiers, at his waist, he was carrying a sword normally used by nobles.

Rody finally turned his attention away from Nicole's body.

He then noticed something peculiar about Master Autumn.

Rody had met master swordsmen before, such as the teachers that teach swordsmanship in the Imperial Academy. There were also the other masters from the Imperial Capital. You could immediately identify them from the crowd.

Based on Rody's impression, master swordsmen would have a certain posture that naturally projects a fierce and powerful presence. It was as if they were afraid that others do not know how strong they were.

On the other hand, Master Autumn was entirely different. He was just casually standing there, looking completely at ease.

He was just like an ordinary person without the imposing manner of a master.

Master Autumn had seen Nicole and Rody as they approached from a distance. He curiously looked at the silver mask on Rody's face.

Before Master Autumn could speak, Nicole explained with a smile, "His look was so special that I decided to give him a mask!"

Thinking of Rody who had a frightening countenance because of his Yin Yang face, Master Autumn gave a faint smile and nodded his head.

Following that he, the strongest swordsman of the Imperial Capital and the one recognized as a grandmaster of swordsmanship, did not spare any pleasantries with Nicole. He casually stated, "Let us begin!"

Finishing his statement, he glanced at Nicole. Nicole smiled back and quietly left.

Master Autumn smiled as he looked at Rody who was standing ramrod straight. He simply said, "Don't be so nervous. Actually, I cannot teach you many things except some simple guides... ah... to be precise, I cannot teach you any specific moves but if you have any question about swordplay, I should be able to give you an answer."

Rody was really nervous. Master Autumn was teaching him swordplay! It was glorious! Master Autumn was the person acknowledged as the future user of the Holy Sword.

"What's wrong? Are there any problems?" Master Autumn smiled.

"Yes!" Rody quickly nodded. "Master Autumn... you... Do you have any disciples?"

“Mmm?” Master Autumn was stunned for a moment as he did not expect Rody to ask him this question. He pondered for a moment before smiling and giving his reply, “Why did you ask me this question? But I can give you an answer. I have no disciples.”

“Oh...” Rody nodded. He started thinking.

Master Autumn made a strange face and continued, "Actually, I should have had an apprentice, however, before I got to meet him... before I was able to receive him as my disciple, he ran away."

“Ran away?” Rody shouted in disbelief.

My God! There is actually such a fool! If you include the number of people who wanted to be Master Autumn’s disciple, including His Majesty the Emperor’s princes and the rest of the commoners, you would find that there would be at least be 3 long rows of people lining up waiting to become his apprentice. No matter how long they waited, their turn would not arrive.

To think that there was an idiot who had the chance to become his disciple but did not want it.

“Excuse me,” Rody carefully asked, “are you willing to accept disciples in the future?”

“Probably,” Master Autumn said, without commitment.

“In that case...” Rody’s voice was more careful, “what are the prerequisites to be your disciple?”

Master Autumn looked deeply at Rody before he replied indifferently, "About this, it is pointless even if you asked." He looked at Rody and laughed. "I will not accept you as my disciple. There is no point in continuing this conversation."

“Why?” Rody blurted out.

“Ai...” Master Autumn sighed lightly, “I have my own reasons.”

Rody cleverly shut his mouth. Since the other party was

unwilling to speak, it is better if he did not pursue the question. After all, to get Master Autumn's guidance itself was already a rare thing.

"If your curiosity has been sated, can we start now? I do not have much time so I cannot stay here for long," Master Autumn smiled. Although he had only met Rody twice, he had a good impression of the youth.

Rody immediately nodded and temporarily pushed the idea of becoming his disciple to the back of his mind. He then asked, "Yesterday, what was the technique you used when you broke my sword? I only remembered parrying two strikes. Why did my sword break into so many pieces?"

Master Autumn thought for a moment before asking again, "You wish to learn that?"

"Yes!" Rody nodded without hesitation.

Chapter 16: Reaching a Higher Level

“Swords are different from other weapons. They are double-edged. They can be used to thrust, slash and cleave. Every swordsman would have their own preference. For example, some warriors are experts at using the broadsword designed for war. Those weapons put emphasis on strength so the requirement for technique is not as high. However, there are also warriors that use longswords. Although they are not as powerful, they have more complex techniques.”

“You should know these things. You must have studied them before. Your foundation is quite good... but I must tell you that these are just the basic theories and there is a big difference from advanced swordsmanship.”

“I am not saying that using a broadsword would require less skill than a longsword or using a longsword would be inferior in strength to a broadsword. For martial arts, regardless of what weapon you use, be it is a sword, a knife, or any other weapon; after a certain level, the strength and technique difference between weapons no longer apply that way.”

“What I meant was... from outside to inside!”

“For example, yesterday, I slashed twice and managed to break your sword into seven or eight pieces... why do you think that happened?”

Master Autumn looked at Rody with a smile.

Rody thought for an answer until his face turned red. However, Master Autumn could not see it as he was wearing a mask. He tried answering, “I heard that all the masters have very fast sword strokes. Could it be that in that instant, there were like seven slashes but I did not notice because it was too fast?”

“Haha...” Master Autumn softly laughed and replied, “No. That

is just a legend. A warrior, no matter how fast, even for the warriors well-known for speed in the Empire, is unable to strike so quickly that people cannot see the different strikes. We are all humans, not Gods!”

“At most, the fastest swordsman can only strike so fast that the opponent has no time to react. However, they cannot strike 7 times in an instant to the extent that the opponent cannot see the different strikes. That is merely a fairytale, not a fact.”

“Like I said, it is from outside to inside.”

“Inside?” Rody frowned.

“That’s right. The inside I am talking about is inner strength. In other words, soft power, Yin power, dark power!”

“For example, look at the water in the river flowing, surging forward. Let the power of our sword be compared to the river. Both you and other swordsmen are like that. However, the river also has whirlpools. The direction of a whirlpool is not forward but circular, in a spiral. At that time, the inner strength is different.”

Rody seemed to have understood and nodded his head.

Master Autumn squatted before reaching out. His fingers grabbed a handful of mud and formed a ball with his hands.

“Catch this!” As soon as he said that, Master Autumn threw the ball at Rody.

Rody caught the mud ball by reflex but almost lost hold of it as it bounced twice in his hand.

He pondered for a moment and could not help but say, “I think I understand a little. Metaphorically, a common swordsman would be like the mud you just threw. Its direction is obvious! There is a signal for their attacks. Such as a thrust being a thrust, a slash being a slash and a cleave being a cleave. However, the situation is different after reaching a higher level. For example...”

Rody's raised his hand and threw the mud ball he was holding. However, this time his finger flexed a little differently. As the mud ball flew out, it did not simply fly out in a straight line but seemed to spin.

The corners of Master Autumn's mouth curled into a smile as he replied, "Not bad, not bad. You comprehend quickly."

Rody was in a good mood and loudly said, "In that case, I have already understood the principles. My sword was cut into seven or eight pieces not because your strikes were too fast. Although there were only two strikes, the use of strength was more ingenious. That is why, using inner strength, my sword was cut into pieces."

Rody pondered for a while then said, "Perhaps, this is no longer a swordsmanship technique but a technique on how to use strength. This technique does not apply to just swords, right?"

By the end of his sentence, Rody's tone had become more excited and cheerful.

Master Autumn nodded and sternly said, "Even these techniques of force application are not anything particularly advanced. Generally speaking, when your swordsmanship becomes more skilled, you will naturally learn these as well. Even if you actually comprehend this one day, you would still be an ordinary swordsman. Perhaps smarter than other swordsmen but not anywhere close to a real master..."

Rody immediately asked, "In that case... What is a real master?"

Master Autumn did not give a direct answer but asked, "Who do you think is stronger? A magician or a warrior?"

Rody thought for a moment before sighing, "Of course it is the magician."

"Why?"

Rody pursed his lips. This was not visible to Master Autumn. However, it was evident in his voice that he was puzzled. "Isn't it

obvious? A high-level swordsman is able to kill several people with each swing. However, a senior magician, with one spell, can cause large-scale destruction such as creating earthquakes, lightning storms or flash fires."

"Haha!" Master Autumn smiled. "Since you think that swordsmen would lose to magicians, why would there be any swordsman left in this world? All of us should forget everything and become magicians!"

Rody paused for a moment. He never thought of that question.

"Watch carefully!" Master Autumn stopped smiling.

He pointed his longsword to the sky as his face turned solemn. In a split second, in Rody's eyes, the world seemed to have changed.

Master Autumn was still the same man but, right then, that was not the case any longer in Rody's eyes.

If Master Autumn's body, that had previously looked weak, was like a sheathed blade, then at that moment the blade had just been unsheathed.

Master Autumn's entire body exuded a bone-chilling, menacing aura.

A strange scene appeared in front of Rody. With Master Autumn as the center, everything around him seemed to rotate. Although the yard and the tree remained firmly in place, in Rody's eyes, the space around it seemed to turn distorted. All of creation seemed to be attracted towards Master Autumn! It was as if a larger force was pulling everything towards Master Autumn!

Although the scene seemed to be unreal, Rody did not dare to blink. He held his breath and stared intently at Master Autumn for fear of missing something!

"Kill!" Master Autumn cried out. The sword cleaved in a flash.

With the sound of a large explosion, the blade seemed to become

a massive blade of light shooting skywards!

Rody stared with his eyes wide open at the dazzling lightblade. Even though it was daytime, the light was nevertheless clearly visible.

Rody was certain that if he had been hit by that lightblade, not just his sword but even his whole body as well as everything in the yard and even the stuff behind him would have been turned into dust.

Rody opened his mouth and muttered. “What... what is this? Is this even swordsmanship?”

Master Autumn smiled. The longsword in his hands had lost its light and was sheathed.

Rody was still gasping, “Which part of this is swordsmanship? This is definitely magic... no... maybe it is sorcery. But it is definitely not swordsmanship.”

“You are wrong!” Master Autumn gently patted Rody’s shoulder and said, “This is definitely swordsmanship! It is a very advanced swordsmanship skill! It doesn’t matter which weapon you use, whether it be a knife or a sword. This is the highest degree of inner strength!”

“The highest degree of inner strength?” Rody did not understand.

Master Autumn replied, “You said earlier that a sorcerer or a magician can create earthquakes, lightning storms and flash fires. However, that is not normal strength! For a normal person with a mortal body, no matter how big it is, it would be impossible to achieve that kind of power! Therefore, whether it is sorcery or magic, they both use supernatural powers.”

“Supernatural power?”

“That’s right! Our world is a world composed of energy. The stars, the rising and setting of the sun, the high tides and low tides,

the changing of seasons... all of these natural events also possess energy and strength! Regardless of whether it is magic or sorcery, all skills are about utilizing this energy.”

“What about the martial way?”

“That is where the difference between the martial way and the magical way lies,” Master Autumn showed some pride. “The martial way is not about using other forces but to cultivate themselves so that they have a more powerful force! For us warriors, cultivation is our real power!”

“Our own strength?”

“Correct!” Master Autumn said again. “A magician can do the same thing I just did. However, it is not with his own energy. He uses the technique and some kind of energy from the natural world but I am different. That sword earlier was made from the power in my body!”

Rody stared at Master Autumn with wide eyes.

His own power. God! Just now that heaven-shaking sword had so much power! All that super destructive power! All of it was from his inner strength?

Master Autumn smiled. “You don’t have to be so surprised. I am telling you this to let you know that warriors are not necessarily weaker than magicians. If they trained extremely hard, they can be stronger than magicians.”

“But... this is truly amazing!” Rody sighed.

Master Autumn shook his head. “This is nothing. Do you know, the ancient user of the Holy Sword can cleave mountains and pierce through city walls! That is truly the highest level of the warrior! Compared to them, our powers now are nothing!”

“Splitting mountains, piercing through city walls...” Rody’s eyes flashed. His eyes were full of excitement and his mouth was muttering.

Master Autumn looked at the obsessed person in front of him and smiled. “Now let me ask you. Where does the warrior’s power come from?”

“Mmmm?” Rody was stunned for a moment and blurted out, “From a strong and robust body!” However, the moment he said that, Rody corrected himself, “However, that is also wrong... in the academy, there are a lot of teachers that are much stronger than you but not as powerful as you! They definitely cannot cleave with their swords like you do!”

“Correct. The inner strength does not just come from muscles!”

“In that case, where does the inner strength come from?” Rody asked.

Although Master Autumn had not taught Rody any new moves of swordsmanship, these words without a doubt, would one day guide Rody on the path leading to more advanced levels of the martial way. It was like a new door was opened for Rody and this made him endlessly fascinated!

Master Autumn pondered for a moment. “This problem is not something that can be explained clearly with just a few words. Mmm... how about this? You and I have an affinity. As a result of an oath I have made in my early years, I cannot accept you as a disciple. However, I can give you a small present.”

Having said that, Master Autumn stretched out a finger. With a certain technique, he pressed a point on Rody’s forehead between the eyebrows.

The finger seemed to give out some kind of mystical power, which passed through the silver mask and into Rody’s face! Rody felt a slight pain in between his eyebrows and groaned softly.

Master Autumn looked at Rody and sighed softly, “This is a seed of inner strength! If you can really comprehend advanced martial arts, then this seed that I gave you will help you to achieve

boundless progress!”

Chapter 17: Charming Visitor at Night

If Master Autumn had known that the 'seed' he gave Rody would bring about a huge change in the world, there was a possibility that he would not have done it.

Many years later, a new proverb would appear in the world: A finger changes the world, a seed brings about the fall of an empire.

Naturally, the famous sage Master Seth somehow understood the philosophical words left by the sage Dandong and comprehended its meaning.

Lost a nail, break a hoof.

Broke a hoof, lose a battle horse.

Lost a battle horse, injure a knight.

Injured a knight, lose a message.

Lost a message, lose a battle.

Lost a battle, lose a war.

Lost a war, the fall of an empire.

The phrase was extremely interesting. Something that is insignificant could snowball and develop unexpectedly.

The 'seed' filled with power that was given by Master Autumn to Rody was one of them.

Rody, after receiving Master Autumn's finger treatment, finally woke up after a long time. He did not truly understand what Master Autumn was saying but he understood subconsciously that he was no longer the same.

However, he could not tell what was different.

Nicole did not intend to let him come into contact with more outsiders. After the meeting with Master Autumn, she immediately led him back to the laboratory in the small building.

“From today onwards, you will live here!” Nicole said before she started to leave.

Seeing Nicole starting to leave, Rody had summoned his courage and could not help but shout, “Wait, wait... Please wait for a moment!”

“Mm?” Nicole turned around and looked at the boy.

Rody slowly took off his mask and sighed, “Miss Nicole... I mean, Master... I want to know, why this face?”

Nicole looked at him indifferently without speaking.

Rody continued, “I know this face is exactly the same as your brother’s. Why did you transform my appearance into your brother’s?”

Nicole frowned, “When the time comes, you will naturally know. For now, you just need to obey my commands.”

“No,” Rody carefully said. “Actually, I can already guess a little...” Rody hesitated for a moment before he probed again carefully, “You... You want me to pretend to be your brother... Am I right?”

Nicole’s expression changed and she lightly said, “You knew?”

“Of course,” Rody curled his lips. “Just looking at my face now was enough for me to guess.”

Nicole sneered and asked, “Are you not satisfied? You should know that my little brother is famous in the Imperial Capital as a handsome man. This face, compared to your old face is over a thousand times better looking!”

Rody shrugged his shoulders and lightly said, “Unfortunately, no matter how good this face is, it is not my own face!”

Nicole was stunned for a moment. She never expected the young Rody to have such thoughts.

Nicole approached and looked closely at Rody before saying, “Do

you know that I want you to impersonate my brother to help me out? Since you have already guessed it, I will no longer keep it a secret from you! I assume you know about the status of our family! If this matter is completed successfully, I will reward you! You see... Anyway, you cannot go back to the academy. I can recommend you into the army! Then you can become an officer! That would be my compensation to you! Are you willing?"

Army? Officer? Rody became silly! Willing?

Of course, I am willing!

Who doesn't know the Tulip Family's standing in the military? Their family is basically the Empire's Marshal family. If Nicole personally arranged for him to enter the army and he does not perform too poorly, Rody would have a bright future!

No matter how you look at it, it is more attractive than staying in the Imperial Capital as an unknown warrior!

So what if he became an ordinary warrior? Unless he became an expert like Master Autumn, there would be no future as there were thousands of ordinary warriors within the Imperial Capital. The ones that were better off became guards for nobility. As for those that were less capable, they were reduced to street thugs just like what happened to Rody in that incident.

Rody's eyes turned bright.

Was there any young boy that would not want to succeed in the future, especially if they were like Rody who was born a commoner?

Although Rody did not speak, there was now no trace of doubts left in his face.

"In that case..." Rody thought for a moment and said, "Alright. I promise you! But... I have a request! It is really just a small request!"

"What?"

“My friend...” Rody gently said, “Miss Nicole... I know one more or one less groom would not make a difference in your family. Can you let my friend go? Let him go back to the academy!”

Nicole smiled, “This is not a big problem but I must warn you. Although I can promise you that, you must be careful! The most important thing here is confidentiality! Pretending to be my brother, that must not be told to anyone! If someone else found out, hmm hmm...” Nicole did not say what. She just ‘hmm-ed’ twice and Rody quickly shut his mouth without daring to say a single word more.

Since this woman was able to give him a pair of rabbit ears, only God knew what else she could do!

“Alright! From now on, you are going to pretend to be my younger brother! As of today, you are Seth! As you do not know my brother’s habits, I will come every day to train you! This is a secret even at home! You must not let others know about your identity! I will declare that you ran away from home to play and was caught by me. Now you will be confined here to reflect on your actions! That way, we can avoid contact with outsiders!”

Rody nodded, “In that case... Can I look at those books?”

Rody pointed to the huge bookshelves around the room. They were packed with classical literature.

Nicole secretly sighed. Since young, her younger brother Seth had made a lot of errors and had always been confined in this room to reflect on his mistakes. However, every time that fellow set foot in this place, he had only tried to find out how to escape and would never even so much as touch the books.

This child in front of her, although simple minded, had the drive to improve himself.

It was a pity... If the heir of the Tulip family was like this, it would really save Nicole a lot of headaches.

Nicole sighed and said, “Sure! However, you cannot touch these bottles of drugs, as well as those things on the second floor. Anyway, I have already set a spell on them. You will not be able to touch them!”

After finishing what she had to say, Nicole waved her sleeve, turned and left.

Rody watched Nicole leave and breathed a sigh of relief. His eyes glowed excitedly as he cheered and ran to the bookshelves. He greedily and excitedly looked at the huge bookshelves.

That night, Rody did not rest. He excitedly took a tall stack of books to read. Later on, he was just too lazy to run to the table and started to sit cross-legged on the floor.

When nighttime came, he brought the room’s candlestick to his side. He then sat beside a heap of books, leaning against the bookshelf, and continued reading.

Rody had never been so pleased! Although he liked to read books about strange things in the world, the academy could not satisfy his demands. For starters, civilians were not allowed to enter the library to read the collection of rare books. This was a noble’s privilege!

Rody was immersed in joy and satisfaction when he heard the faint sound of footsteps.

The warrior in Rody made him immediately tense up. He jumped up and listened intently.

Sure enough, the gentle footsteps were getting closer. Rody was sure that the person intentionally walked on tiptoes so as to be silent!

Rody dashed to the door and waited at its side.

At that moment, there was a gentle knock on the door. A delicate and timid voice followed. “Young Master Seth... Are you here?”

Rody froze for a moment as he did not know how to answer.

The door slowly opened as a delicate figure came in.

Rody stared at the person but was shocked.

The person that entered was the pretty female servant he saw this morning! At that moment, she dashed out from the doorway with a shy and nervous expression. Her face was extremely red. Her eyes could not look at Rody but at the same time, she could not help but look at him out of the corner of her eye.

“Young Master Seth... I heard... you have been confined in here by Miss... so... I brought you... something to eat... to eat.”

Angel's voice was trembling. Her face was red as if blood was about to seep out. In a timid manner, she gave him a basket. Rody did not look at its contents but from the fragrance, he could already guess what they were.

Angel looked at Rody's handsome face with twinkling eyes. She showed an infatuated expression as her eyes fluttered while continuing to look at Rody's body.

Chapter 18: The Skeleton Can Speak!

If Rody had looked stunned, it would not be the fault of the fragrance of the food in the basket but that of the shy expression of the beautiful young maid!

Rody was already quite grown but he had never once had a girl look at him like that before! Not to mention the fact that this girl was quite charming.

To be frank, Rody's head felt a little bit dizzy.

"Young Master Seth..." Angel could not help but softly call out.

Actually, Angel was terribly confused. She was a natural beauty and Seth also quite liked her. Unfortunately for her, Young Master Seth was born with the innate talents of a playboy. In addition, he did not have just one beautiful maid beside him but also hundreds of noble women around him.

Angel also knew about her Young Master's behavior. However, she was at that young age of being love-struck and that playboy was a veteran in this area. Although Angel constantly reminded herself to be careful, she eventually still fell for the talented, handsome young man. Although Seth frequently took advantage of them and made the young girls feel helpless, he also usually treats them well.

As a commoner with a beautiful face, Angel already knew her own fate. She was just a servant. Even though Young Master Seth may like her at the moment, she did not dare dream about rising one day and turning into a phoenix!

She may feel helpless, but in fact, this kind of situation was quite common in the Imperial Capital.

As long as there are nobles in this world and there are beautiful maids, this kind of thing would definitely happen again.

Angel knew that if she were to continue to follow Young Master

Seth, the best outcome in the future would be to marry him as a concubine or to be secretly arranged as his lover.

However, the most likely outcome was that she would be seduced and then abandoned. After all, she was just a lowly servant.

She had such complex emotions; Angel had some feelings for the playboy Young Master and at the same time she also feared him. However, she heard that Nicole had once again caught him and confined him. At that moment, her soft heart immediately relented. After thinking for a long time, she took some food and secretly came running in the darkness.

Rody felt really afraid and nervous, but also happy!

He was not stupid enough to think that the girl actually liked him. He knew that her target of affection was the playboy that had disappeared to a distant place, not this idiot standing that had never even known the tenderness of ladies. Anyway, Rody just could not bear to tell her the truth.

“Anyway, Miss Nicole told me not to tell the truth,” Rody comforted himself in his mind.

He trembled and laughed as he stretched out his hands to receive the basket. When his hands touched the other party's soft hands, Rody's heart almost jumped out of his chest.

However, Angel was frightened. The Young Master in front of her had a strange expression and his eyes were scary.

Angel subconsciously stepped back and tried to regain her composure. She then said in a heavy voice, “Let me... speak first... I came to see you because I was afraid something had happened to you... I am not here because I agreed to.... to... Do not think of any nonsense...”

“Think about what nonsense?” Rody could not help but ask.

Hearing those words, Angel blushed. She said, “You... you are bullying me again! I'll tell you first... If you... If you try to touch

me... from then on, I will ignore you!”

Rody’s heart thumped once again and his face turned red. Although he was not a romantic person, he understood the meaning of the girl’s words.

Seeing the girl looking at him with fondness and also fear in her eyes, Rody’s heart felt heavy. He thought to himself. What has happened to me? Even if she is beautiful, the person she likes is not me. How can I do that kind of thing? Thinking along these lines, Rody felt ashamed and slapped himself in the face.

Angel jumped in surprise and then saw Rody suddenly look sad. She sadly said, “Young Master Seth... You... you... I... I...”

Rody sternly replied, “Sorry, sorry... I will not do... that anymore!”

Angel looked like she was about to cry. “Young Master Seth... are... are you angry? Do you not like me anymore?”

After that, Angel hid her face with her hands, turned around, and ran out.

Even after the door was slammed shut, Rody was still in a daze. With no experience in dealing with girls, he did not know how he ended up making a pretty girl cry.

Rody sighed and told himself. This is fine. It would avoid trouble. If she found out about my identity, I am afraid Miss Nicole would become angry.

Rody was secretly glad that if not for the unique circumstances earlier where Angel was already agitated, she would have noticed that compared to the real Seth, Rody’s voice was slightly hoarser. This would have given him away.

Rody’s kept thinking about the matter. Even after he sat down, he could not concentrate on reading.

Feeling agitated, Rody stood up again and started to swing his

sword.

The sword that he had initially picked up that day was already destroyed by Master Autumn. His current sword was given to him by Nicole. It was a noble's popular accessory sword. The scabbard was gorgeous and the hilt was embedded with an expensive cat's eye. Not to mention the sword, just the cat's eye was enough to buy a hundred of Rody's original sword.

With a sword in his hand, Rody started to practice slashing. He then tried the techniques he learned at the academy. These techniques were constantly practiced until Rody had mastered them. The amount of strength used must be just right.

Fortunately, the hall of the first floor of the small building was quite spacious. There was enough space for Rody to strike out without restrain in his sword dance.

As Rody trained with his sword, he recalled the words of Master Autumn. The attack that Master Autumn displayed at the end earned Rody's heartfelt admiration.

Thinking like this, Rody started to focus and stood like Master Autumn during the day, his sword pointing skyward. He focused on gathering his strength into his hands, then suddenly shouted and cleaved with the longsword!

The sword stroke was full of energy but nowhere near that of the sword stroke used by Master Autumn during the day.

The sword stroke that Master Autumn displayed can only be described as ground-breaking. It was just a strike yet it would be able to cut a boulder into pieces.

As for Rody's sword stroke, as opposed to the lightblade, the gusts coming out from the sword slashes would not even be able to blow out a candle.

Rody sighed in frustration and was a little angry.

He was normally a stubborn person. Otherwise, he would not

have had the guts to break into the Tulip Family's house in the first place.

He did not stop to catch his breath but stood up again to practice. His sword's strength and his expression seemed more serious this time. He also tried to condense the energy for a longer period of time. His sword strikes did get somewhat swifter and fiercer. However, reaching the realm of lightblade was easier said than done.

Not to mention the fact that Rody originally did not understand advanced swordsmanship. Even if he knew how to practice using the energy, he might need to do it for at least 8-10 years. How would he be able to achieve that state now?

Rody got angry as he continued to slash a few more times. He continued to try several more times without progress. Each time he did it, the power of the sword grew weaker.

After his last slash, Rody started gasping heavily. His two arms felt soft and weak.

The moment Rody stopped using his energy, he felt dizzy and was forced to sit down.

At this point, something strange happened!

A ray of light started to shine from Rody's forehead and he felt a severe pain in his head. Rody screamed loudly! He felt like hot water was flowing down from his brain, and it slowly flowed to his arms. His weak and soft arms immediately felt like they could lift a thousand pounds!

The severe pain in his head became more and more violent and Rody felt like his head would split in two. Unable to bear it, Rody screamed and slashed.

'Whoosh!' A silvery half-moon-shaped light shot out from Rody's sword. The lightblade shone like a rainbow. Rody did not react until he heard the sound of the table in front of him being

smashed.

The wooden table was shattered. Even the scattered books and utensils on the table were also crushed.

Rody stupidly looked at the scene in front of him.

He looked at the table that was divided into seven or eight pieces as well as the mess on the floor. Rody took a deep breath.

“Did... did I do this?”

Being pleasantly surprised, Rody no longer cared if he was going to be scolded by Miss Nicole in the morning.

He weighed the sword in his hands, took a deep breath and suddenly shouted out. The sword slashed out again!

This was, without a doubt, the lightblade. Rody laughed loudly. As Rody was agitated and he had put too much force in his hands plus the fact that he did not hold the sword firmly enough, his sword flew out!

That really scared the wits out of Rody.

The sword flew across the hall and towards a massive iron shelf. Rody clearly understood that the iron shelf was the one with all the terrifying medicine bottles Nicole told him about.

“I’m doomed!” Before Rody could cry out, from within a void, an eerie claw stretched out and grabbed the longsword in its hands.

The white skeleton that had been standing in the corner appeared in front of Rody all of a sudden, with the sword in its hands.

Rody’s eyeballs almost popped out!

“Aaah!” Rody gave out a blood-curdling scream. The white skeleton threw the sword onto the ground. Its eye socket looked at Rody and a human voice came out from its mouth.

“I was sleeping peacefully! If I had not been careful, your sword

would have already pierced my heart!”

Chapter 19: Subversion

Rody's face turned into a pale white. He looked at the skeleton that just spoke in a human's voice, and he was about to scream!

"You... you... you... you..." Rody could feel his mouth trembling. It was understandable. Most people would be scared to death if a skeleton suddenly appeared in front of them and started talking in the middle of the night.

"Who are... you?" Gathering a bit of courage, Rody completed his sentence.

"Who?" The jaw of the skeleton moved, "Do you think I am a person?"

Rody moved away a little, a bit to its side. Only God knows if this thing has any malice. "In that case, what are you?" Although his mouth was doing the asking, Rody's eyes were looking at the sword on the floor. It would be great if he could get the sword.

"Do you want the sword?" The skeleton's voice made Rody jump. Without thinking, he reflexively asked, "How did you know?"

The skeleton stretched out its hand, picked up the sword and gently tossed it over.

Rody grabbed the sword without difficulty and immediately took a defensive posture.

"Are you planning to fight me?" The skeleton looked at Rody and slowly asked.

Honestly, Rody felt his legs going limp but he still gritted his teeth and asked, "What are you?"

"I am Andy, just a human skeleton!" The skeleton's voice was flat as he continued, "You are too weak, it is better if you don't attempt to fight me."

"Andy? A skeleton can also have a name?" Rody could hardly

believe his ears.

“Why not?” The skeleton’s voice was somewhat dissatisfied. “Why can’t skeletons have names? My name is given to me by my master. Therefore, there is nothing wrong about it! Everything my master does is correct!”

“Master?” Rody asked, “In that case, who is your master? Is your master Miss Nicole?”

“Who is Nicole? My master’s name is not Nicole...” The skeleton’s voice was not loud but the next few words almost made Rody jump in surprise.

“My master’s name is Dandong!” The skeleton said.

Dandong?

As in 'Sage Dandong'?

Is this some kind of big joke?

That Sage Dandong left behind a talking skeleton, a skeleton with a name?

Rody had heard that a powerful sorcerer or magician would be able to manipulate objects. There were also rumors of a sorcerer in the northern part of the Roland continent who could manipulate skeleton soldiers.

However, if it was a talking, thinking skeleton, chances are that nobody in this world has seen it before.

If it was really one of the ‘things’ left behind by the Great Sage Dandong, (Rody was unable to treat it as a ‘person’) then the skeleton would be at least 200 years old, right?

Even if a spell could make this thing move, even if the Great Sage could make the skeleton walk and talk, it would be strange if the spell had not worn out after 200 years!

Thinking like this, Rody turned pale with a scary thought! This thought truly frightened him.

Perhaps the skeleton was not manipulated with magic. (The spell would have dissipated 200 years ago) Then the only remaining possibility is that the skeleton is already alive! It is a living creature!

My God!

A living creature! Dandong created a living skeleton!

Rody's face was already white as he stared at the skeleton known as Andy.

"You... you were created by Dandong?" Rody took a deep breath and asked. He emphasized the word 'created.'

"Yes."

My God!

Rody could not help but cry out! This completely overthrew the Empire's entire theological system.

Rody still remembered his first day in the Imperial Academy. The first sentence of the first chapter in theology said: All life was created by God!

What does this sentence mean? It means that in this world, all life was created by the Almighty God! All species were created by God!

God! Only the Almighty God, could create life!

On the other hand, although humanity was known to be clever, although they could create tools and invent new cultures, they were unable to create life out of thin air!

Naturally, giving birth is not counted. One way of looking at it was that humanity's reproduction is merely a kind of replication.

That is why the Empire's largest theological system proudly declared that all life was created by God! Only God is able to create life!

But this Dandong! The Empire's greatest sage, actually destroyed this eternal truth?

"You... you are here... Were you always here?" Rody swallowed.

"Correct..." Andy's voice was a little bit low, "Master said, I am not allowed to go out... this is because if I am seen by others, there will be a lot of trouble."

"Trouble..." Rody forced a smile.

Big trouble! If others found out that Dandong actually created life out of thin air, or some kind of strange creature, even if Dandong was the Empire's greatest scholar and sage for hundreds of years, he would be seen as a heretic and would immediately be dragged out by the guys at the temple to hang!

Even the Emperor would not be able to save him!

It was no joke! It was challenging God's prestige!

It was a subversion!

"So you stayed here? For 200... 200 years?" Rody felt that his brain was starting to fail him.

"I do not know. Basically, I am always here."

"There are always people moving around this room. No one has ever discovered you?"

Andy's tone became strange, "My Master has taught me of a method to sleep. As long as I do not want to wake up, others would not be able to find me!"

"My luck must be really good!" Rody groaned.

Surprisingly, Andy's scary skull started to shake as it told Rody something even more astonishing.

"I dared to talk to you because you have Master's odor. You are wearing Master's mask! If I did not see you wearing this thing, I would not be bothered with you!"

Rody subconsciously touched his face and cried out in fear, “You mean this shitty ‘God’s Smile’? My God! It was something that Dandong wore?” Suddenly, Rody’s eyes turned bright as he blurted out, “Do you know how to use this thing?”

Rody’s heart was filled with hope. He could finally get rid of these damned rabbit ears!

However, the skeleton’s next words almost made Rody faint.

“You do not know? The mask, once worn, cannot be taken off by anyone except Master.”

The Master?

Dandong has been dead for 200 years! His bones could even be used for drumming already!

Rody felt his legs go weak again and sat on the floor.

Was he really so unlucky? He finally got rid of his Yin Yang face and became better looking but the rabbit ears would now follow him for life!

Chapter 20: The Voyeur

Rody held his head in his hands as he sat on the floor without saying a single word. On the other hand, Andy was standing quietly at one side.

After some time, Andy said, “Perhaps you want to take off the mask? Do you know that there are a lot of people in this world who would want to get their hands on this thing? Why do you seem so unwilling?”

“Ummm?” Hearing these words, Rody's heart stirred. Perhaps this unlucky ‘God's Smile’ had more secrets to it.

Andy lazily said to himself, “You don't look stupid. How did Master's mask end up being passed to you? Master once said that whoever obtained this mask would be able to inherit his wisdom! But you... you don't seem to appreciate it...”

Its voice was lazy but when its words reached Rody's ears, it was earth-shattering!

Dandong's wisdom!!!

Rody immediately stood up and shouted, “You... did you say... Dandong's wisdom?!”

Andy suddenly burst into laughter. The sound of his laughter sounded creepy in the middle of the night. Without bold courage, most people who were unlike Rody would have already fainted if they saw a skeleton laughing heartily.

Rody could not help but ask loudly, “How could this be? Why does obtaining this mask mean being able to obtain Dandong's wisdom?”

Andy stopped laughing and asked back, “Why do I need to tell you?”

“...” Rody was stumped for words.

Andy simply continued on its own. “Mm... Based on what Master has told me, if you want to get an answer from me and I am unwilling to tell you, you can only use coercion and cajolery... Mmm, something about people using force to threaten other people and something like torture... but you are too weak. I can defeat you with one finger... it seems that method is impossible for you... hmm... there is also lying and deceiving me into giving you an answer... But you don't look that smart either...”

Those words made Rody's face turn red.

“What do you want so that you are willing to tell me the secrets?”

Andy asked back, “Why do you want Master's wisdom?”

This question made Rody freeze for a moment.

Why?

Dandong's wisdom and heritage were priceless. With Dandong's wisdom, there would be many earth-shaking discoveries.

But what do these have to do with an ordinary commoner like him?

Subconsciously, Rody knew that Dandong's wisdom was very important and must definitely be discovered. However, he never thought about what to do with Dandong's wisdom after its discovery.

“I...” Rody thought for a long time and finally gave a wry smile, “At the very least, I can find a way to take off this mask?”

Finishing this sentence, Rody looked at Andy with hope.

Suddenly, there was a clear and crisp knock on the door.

Rody was shocked and subconsciously looked at the door. He was not checking for ghosts but if someone saw him talking to a skeleton, nothing good would come of it!

When Rody turned back to look at Andy, he found Andy already standing quietly at its original corner, motionless. It was like how

Rody had first seen it on the first day.

The skeleton looked completely lifeless as it should!

Rody sighed in relief. He knew that Andy did not want others to discover its existence. Rody cleared his throat and shouted loudly, “Who is it?”

A respectful voice answered from outside, “Young Master, it is me.”

After that, the door opened and an old man with gray hair walked in.

The old man looked somewhat familiar. Rody finally remembered. This old man was the one on Miss Nicole’s carriage that he and Star had attacked that night.

Speaking of which, that Rody was in such a predicament today was also partly the fault of this old groom.

That night, Nicole had told him to pick someone to carry home. Of all the people on the ground, the old man decided to grab Star who was the furthest away from him.

As a result, Rody got desperate and broke into the Tulip Family’s home before being captured by Miss Nicole.

Thus, Rody decided to show a somewhat unfriendly face.

The old groom, Old Mark, did not care about Rody’s expression and bowed respectfully, “Young Master, it’s dawn. The lady has asked me to bring you over.”

“It is dawn?” Rody was shocked. “It’s already dawn?”

“Yes,” Old Mark, while still maintaining respectful form, glanced at the table that was cut into seven or eight pieces by Rody and the messy floor.

Rody felt somewhat embarrassed and said, “This is... last night I was practicing swordplay and accidentally...”

Old Mark did not bat an eye. He said in the same tone as before, "Master, you must be tired after practicing throughout the night. I will ask the others to help clean this up. Follow me to see Miss Nicole for now. If you are late... I am afraid it would not bring you any good."

Rody sighed. Since Nicole called him, he would not dare to delay.

Without a choice, he followed Old Mark out of the room.

Once he walked out of the door, he looked back at Andy to find the skeleton secretly lifting his hand to wave goodbye.

This skeleton!

The sky was indeed starting to turn bright. However, it was still not quite sunrise yet. Rody honestly did not know why Nicole had called for him so early in the morning. Perhaps the whole family liked to get up early?

Nicole's bedroom was upstairs, above the room Rody had slept in that day, Seth's bedroom. It was in the biggest most well-designed building in the luxurious complex.

Old Mark brought Rody to Nicole's bedroom. He knocked on the door before stepping back to stand behind Rody.

Someone inside the room immediately and gently opened the door.

A maid was standing at the doorway. When she saw Rody, she immediately bowed and greeted Rody, "Young Master." After that, she moved aside to make way for Old Mark and Rody.

Rody put on a brave front and entered the room.

Nicole's room was slightly smaller than Seth's room but the decorations in the room were more refined. Especially the elegant jewelry and the other small ornaments on the dressing table. These gave the room a softer mood.

Nicole was not in the room but was behind a screen in the corner

of the room. Her voice came from behind, "Stay there and wait! Wait for me to come out and talk to you!"

Behind the screen, a maid was attending to Nicole, helping her to get dressed. She stood behind Nicole to help her fasten the complicated ribbons and buttons.

Rody could not help but look at the screen. Although he was separated by the screen and could not really see anything, he could still see the shadows from behind the screen. The sexy silhouette of a young girl changing clothes made Rody's heart accelerate.

He suddenly had a strange thought. It would be great if I could see through that screen.

As soon as that thought passed, Rody felt his eyes become brighter. After that, the screen in front of him immediately turned transparent.

What just happened?

Before he was even surprised, the sexy scene behind the screen had firmly grabbed Rody's gaze!

Behind the screen, Nicole's beautiful golden hair was being tied up as the maid helped her put on a skirt. Nicole was also only in her undergarments. That bold and unrestrained figure almost made Rody's eyes pop out. Nicole bent over and her whole body formed a graceful curve that looked like a deformed 'S' shape. She looked stunning, especially when you consider her long legs, slender waist and most importantly, her full bosom.

Rody could not help but gently cried out, "Ah."

Chapter 21: Family Degenerate

Rody's scream was not too loud when he noticed it and subconsciously covered his mouth with his hands. His eyes stared intently at the screen. If he shifted his eyes away, he could not be called a man.

Fortunately, Nicole had finished putting on her clothes. She walked out and gently looked at the dumbstruck Rody. "Why did you cry out earlier?"

Would Rody dare to tell her the truth? Would he be able to say, "Earlier, I was watching you change your clothes while you were in your undies"?

Fortunately, Nicole did not intend to pursue this matter and lightly told him, "Today, you shall follow me."

Without waiting for Rody's reply, she walked towards the door and led the way.

Rody took a deep breath and followed from behind.

Rody's attention was transfixed by Nicole's slender figure swaying in front. However, no matter how Rody tried to contort his eyes, the X-ray vision he could use earlier no longer worked.

"What the hell..." Rody sighed.

The Tulip Family was truly worthy of the title of the God of War's family. Their martial spirit was extremely strong. Their family actually had a frighteningly large training ground which only served to increase the awe Rody felt for them.

The training ground was actually as large as the one in the Imperial Academy! Also, the Imperial Academy's training ground was, in fact, sufficient to accommodate several hundreds of people at once.

This room was twice as large as an average room. On both sides

of the room were rows of weapon racks. They had all kinds of weapons arranged there including spears used for war.

The surrounding walls seemed to be built of solid rocks scarred by slash and stab marks all over. It was nothing unexpected as warriors would train here fiercely. While training, their weapons may slip out of their grips and given their strength, the weapons may even strike the walls on accident, damaging them in the process.

When Rody followed Nicole into the training ground, there were already numerous people training there. It would seem that they were the Tulip Family's guards.

A guy with a bearded face also seemed to glance around as he stood at the side.

Someone immediately saw Nicole the moment she stepped into the training grounds. Many of the guards that were training immediately stopped and bowed to Nicole. Just from their bows, one could tell that they were official warriors.

In the Empire, the different classes of people were distinctly identifiable. Depending on a person's status, the proper and accepted etiquette has already been predetermined and established. An official warrior must bow to their superiors such as seniors or masters. They have to put their right hand over their hearts and then bend their bodies. This was the standard warrior etiquette used when greeting one's superior. Naturally, when greeting another warrior of the same level, a different method of saluting was used.

Rody followed Nicole restlessly into the training ground. The bearded man walked over and displayed his earnest etiquette before asking, "Miss! Why are you here today?"

Nicole looked calm but sighed. "Why else if not for him?" Carter saw the odd-looking Rody standing behind Nicole and quickly saluted again. "Young Master Seth!"

Nicole indifferently said, “In a few months, it would be His Majesty’s assessment. I am really worried. That is why I have to supervise him here to ensure that he trains. Mister Carter, I hope you can discipline him well!”

Carter looked a little helpless but nodded. “Understood! I will not let you down..”

Rody who was standing behind Nicole wanted to cry from the bottom of his heart. He had not yet eaten breakfast that morning! He could not help but remember the delicious food sent to him by the beautiful maid. Unfortunately, he had not even touched it.

“Everyone, halt!” The bearded man, Carter shouted.

The training warriors immediately stopped what they were doing, went to the sides and started to form ranks.

Rody was impressed looking at the warriors' pace and actions. These guys seem to be soldiers. However, these thoughts merely flashed past his mind, after which he immediately felt at ease. The Tulip Family is a family of military leaders. Their guards would also naturally be soldiers.

Carter bellowed a few orders and the soldiers neatly formed two rows. Each person had a standing posture that was in accordance with the strict standards of the army. Their eyes looked forward and their expression was solemn and respectful.

“Miss Nicole, Young Master Seth, should we start now?” Carter inquired.

Nicole nodded before turning around to look indifferently at Rody. She softly said, “Perform well, my little brother!”

Rody heard Nicole’s hidden warning and helplessly walked a few steps forward.

Carter hesitated for a moment. From his many years of service in the Tulip Family, he had understood the level of ability of Young Master Seth. Although he did not dare to say it, his heart was sure

that Young Master Seth was not soldier material! His strength was akin to rubbish and a Grade 1 swordsman could easily cut him down. However, as he needed to train the young master today, he felt a bit awkward.

To train seriously, one of the soldiers under his guidance might accidentally make him lose face. At the end of the day, Young Master Seth was still their Master and it would not be appropriate to do so. Although Miss Nicole asked him to seriously train Seth, if the bungling oaf was shamed, Miss Nicole would also be unhappy.

It was a known fact that the guards of this family did not think highly of Young Master Seth. Although they were full of respect and worshiped the Tulip Family, Young Master Seth's usual behavior made them unable to even show the slightest bit of respect for him. To them, Young Master Seth's greatest contribution was to smear the proud name of the Tulip Family.

However, Miss Nicole was different. She was outstanding in all aspects. She was deserving of her perfect appearance and the Tulip Family's blood. She also treated everybody well in any occasion. Her beauty was so celestial that it felt like no mortal could ever be her equal in appearance. The young warriors were already worshipping Nicole like a goddess while giving her their utmost respect. Many people believed that if she were a boy, she would be the rightful family heir.

If the bungling oaf of a young master lost face, Miss Nicole would also be unhappy. This was not something the young warriors wanted to see as well.

“Fendell! Come out!” Carter pondered for a moment to decide before lightly calling out.

A young warrior stepped out immediately from within the formation.

The warrior was very young. When he heard Instructor Carter call for him, he was extremely excited as he was in front of Miss

Nicole. He did not shout in front of Instructor Carter but he exclaimed in his mind. His excitement was understandable. As for the two rows of warriors behind him, although they were silent, their eyes were full of envy.

Carter told him loudly, "Fendell, you will train with Young Master Seth today!" After that, he told him in a low voice that was difficult to hear. "Go easy on him. Understand?"

Fendell stood straight and replied, "Yes!"

Nicole watched the young warrior and quickly opened her mouth. "No! I want you to go all out! My purpose is to hone the skills of my little brother! Do not show him mercy just because he is my little brother! If that happens, I will feel disappointed! You understand? Warrior Fendell?"

Fendell looked at Nicole respectfully and excitedly said, "Yes! I will not let Miss be disappointed!"

Carter wanted to say something but he swallowed his words.

Forget it. Why bother speaking and risk angering Miss Nicole? What's more, if we really insist on Fendell going easy on him, Young Master Seth would also lose face.

Fortunately, Fendell was the youngest and weakest warrior training under me. He just only passed the examination this year and is merely a Grade 1 swordsman. Although Young Master Seth is weak, at the very least, he would not lose in an unsightly manner. As long as there are no injuries, it should be enough. As long as I am here, nothing serious should happen.

Rody also pursed his lips in disappointment. Yet, his reasons were different from Nicole's. He had already figured out the strength of this young warrior with a glance.

Nicole was a sorcerer and did not understand the strength of warriors. However, Rody was already a standard warrior. Although he had not passed the examination, Master Autumn had

said that he was already as strong as a Grade 2 warrior. The young warrior in front of him was no match for him.

However, Rody was also not an idiot. He naturally understood Carter's intention when he chose such a person to train with him.

Sigh. That Seth is really no ordinary oaf. How did the great Tulip Family give birth to such a fellow...

Urged by Nicole's gaze, Rody reluctantly walked to the middle and faced the young warrior.

Fendell was truly excited. He was young and full of vigor. When he was first transferred to be a guard of the Tulip Family, he saw Miss Nicole from a distance. He was shocked by her peerless beauty. Although he never dared to have any hopes, he was already worshipping Miss Nicole like a goddess. At that moment, Miss Nicole entrusted him with a task. How could he go easy on his opponent now? He had already forgotten about Instructor Carter's words.

Fendell took a deep breath and slowly drew his sword. He swished his sword to the bottom left part of his torso and nodded to Rody. This was the common courtesy and etiquette performed between warriors before dueling.

Rody smiled in his heart. He drew his sword and returned the courtesy. Then he quietly looked at his opponent and smiled. "Bring it on."

Chapter 22: The Colossus Randt

Fendell looked at the playboy in front of him. For some reason, he felt uneasy. This was a warrior's innate vigilance. However, he never expected that this famous bungling oaf figure in front of him would be a threat to him.

Using the most basic attacking posture, Fendell cried out as he dashed forward. He then slashed from top to bottom.

Rody's expression was serious. This was the first time he had a formal match against an actual warrior. Although he had fought against other students before, this was the first time it was against an official warrior.

Both the warriors fought with basic skills as they moved about attacking each other. It was a rather lively scene with the sound of swords clashing.

Standing at the side, Carter was surprised. As far as he was concerned, for the bungling oaf to last three rounds against Fendell was already a miracle. Everybody knew that Young Master Seth's skills was in womanizing and not in swordsmanship.

However, Young Master Seth and Fendell seemed to be equally matched in strength! The most surprising thing for Carter was that Young Master Seth was actually using the most basic skills of swordsmanship. From Carter's many years of experience, he could see with a glance that Young Master Seth's swordsmanship was definitely not inferior to Fendell! In fact, he was probably stronger and more skillful than Fendell! Also, he could see clearly that Young Master Seth had obviously gone through rigorous training in swordsmanship! Although he had not yet gained the upper hand then, it was only because he was nervous.

The other warriors were also surprised. When did that bungling oaf suddenly become so strong?

Two months ago, Nicole had also brought this bungling oaf to participate in training. However, in just a short while, the oaf had ended up running away with the sword while being chased by one of the guards! As a result of Seth's disgraceful display, Nicole had looked terribly disappointed. That was why Instructor Carter specifically looked for the weakest warrior to train with the young master.

While these varying thoughts ran through the onlookers' minds, the two men fought on.

Clang!

The two swords clashed again! Rody backstepped twice and watched his opponent's movements.

This was the ninth time the swords had clashed. Rody could feel that his opponent's wrist strength was weaker than his own. Most likely, his opponent's wrist had begun to feel numb. It was well known in the Academy that Rody's wrist strength was the strongest. To continue fighting with Rody so recklessly would only result in Fendell's defeat!

Fendell's face had already turned red from the rush of blood. No matter how he thought about it, he could not figure out when did this 'famous bungling oaf' suddenly became so strong. At this moment, his right hand had started to tremble. The pain in his hand was genuine.

He had also realized Young Master Seth's proficiency in swordsmanship was now higher than his!

Nicole was secretly pleased as she watched from the side. Rody's current strength satisfied her. She had arranged for today's training so as to test out Rody's real strength. Naturally, Nicole also had another intention. She was smart and knew that these men had complaints about her little brother. If things continued as such, the Tulip Family's heir would have no dignity. Today, it would be better to make use of Rody to redeem their trust towards

the heir of the Tulip Family. Otherwise, they would forever assume that the Tulip Family's heir was a useless bum.

Rody's nervousness dissipated gradually.

His movements became smoother and his mind became less distracted. His strikes were now being parried by Fendell in an increasingly frantic manner to the point where Fendell could no longer cope.

Sensing Fendell faltering, Rody shouted, "Go!"

With another loud bang, Fendell could no longer hold his sword and the sword was sent flying by Rody. Taking advantage of his opponent's surprise, Rody gave him a flying kick. Fendell was kicked in the waist and fell down. Rody then put the sword at his neck.

"Stop!" Carter shouted at the right time.

After that, Rody nodded and stepped back. He said in a low voice, "You lose."

Fendell's face turned red. Without saying a word, he got up and picked up his own sword. He then bowed to Rody before striding back into formation.

Carter's face had a puzzled expression as he said in a peculiar voice, "Young Master Seth seemed to have made a lot of progress recently. Congratulations to Young Master and to Miss!"

Nicole showed a satisfied smile. She looked at Rody gently now, unlike on previous occasions.

"Randt! Step forward!" Before Rody could speak, Carter had issued another order.

With Carter's orders, a large man from the first row stepped out with his head held high and his chest pushed to the front.

Carter looked seriously at the large man and commanded loudly, "Come over here and train with Young Master Seth!"

The large man, Randt, nodded his head and walked to the middle of the yard.

The other warriors on the sidelines did not speak. However, their expressions revealed their surprise.

Randt is summoned? Did Instructor Carter lose his mind?

Randt was the strongest warrior among them! He had already reached Grade 4 as a warrior! He was also not that far from the instructor in strength and was one of the disciples Carter was most proud of! If properly trained, a person with Grade 4 strength could become a valiant general of the Empire!

More importantly, at the training session two months ago, it was Randt who had slashed at Young Master Seth and made him run away crying. It had also made Miss Nicole enraged for a week!

Everyone knew Randt was a dim-wit. The other warriors knew when to hold back and always made sure that the Young Master did not lose too badly. However, this blockhead did not understand this at all.

In fact, Instructor Carter also did this as he had no other alternative!

He had clearly seen Young Master Seth's level. Young Master Seth's strength had already surpassed the level of a Grade 2 swordsman. He was probably not much different from a Grade 3 swordsman. Among his disciples, Randt was a Grade 4 swordsman but the others were stuck at Grade 2. No matter who he sent out, they would only lose.

Within his heart was also a hint of selfishness. His pride as a soldier made him unwilling to watch his disciples lose one-by-one to someone else. Especially not in front of their respected Miss Nicole and most definitely not to this famous bungling oaf!

In other words, it could also be said that the playboy Young Master Seth must not win the next match.

“Young Master Seth! I am going to attack!” Randt spoke in a low voice as he lifted his weapon.

Although Rody was tall, Randt was taller by at least a full head! His whole body was like a small hill to Rody. His uniform appeared tight as his muscles seemed like it was about to rip the uniform apart.

He was using a broadsword that was also commonly used on the battlefield. The difference was that his broadsword was larger than the common broadsword used by others.

Rody's pulse quickened. He knew that this opponent was not so simple. Just from a physical point-of-view, it was clear that the other party was much stronger than him. Rody concentrated and held the hilt with both hands. His muscles all over his body tightened and he adopted a fighting stance.

“Kill!” Randt suddenly roared! His broadsword came down like a fierce black light.

Rody gritted his teeth, stepped forward and blocked the attack. The swords clashed. Rody felt like his sword was hit by lightning as his hands were tingling. He also felt like he had run into a wall and could not help but retreat a few steps.

He looked at his own sword as it trembled like a leaf. The sword itself also seemed to whine in protest. If he were to block such a blow several more times, even if his strength could support the sword, it would without a doubt break apart.

Randt slashed again, forcing Rody to stagger back several steps. Before Rody could catch his breath, he stepped forward and swung his sword at Rody in an arc.

Before the sword even reached him, Rody already felt the strong wind from the imposing momentum of the sword. He dared not block it head on and evaded to the side.

The other warriors could not help but smile when they saw this

scene.

In the end, it is still the same! The bungling oaf is still a bungling oaf! Last time, he ran away from Randt. Now it seems that history is repeating itself!

Rody stopped in his tracks and frowned. He looked at Randt who was like a giant and was lost in thought.

What the hell! This guy's strength is too strong! How should I deal with him?

A scene suddenly flashed in Rody's mind! The sword stroke that Master Autumn showed him that day! That sword stroke that can shake heaven and earth!

Power!

Hmph! Power? Your muscle power is strong indeed! But what is the use of such measly power when it encounters real power?!

Chapter 23: I Did Not Lose!

Rody's mind was still pondering that idea when Randt attacked him again before he could catch his breath. He turned his body but at the same time the broadsword had already started to slash down at him. Rody hurriedly dodged. His footwork was already in disorder. Although he managed to sidestep that slash, the sharp wind that came from the sword managed to slice a piece of his clothing!

Before Rody could even cry out in alarm, Nicole who was watching from the side gasped in fear!

It was just the strong wind from the sword but it managed to cut Rody's clothes?

Nicole started to worry. It would not be good for Rody to be injured.

Randt had seen Rody's fighting style and understood that his opponent did not want to fight recklessly against himself, but instead was trying to be crafty. The combat experienced Randt was not anxious and slowly forced his opponent to retreat. Although it seemed stupid, this steady way of fighting was very effective.

After a few rounds, Rody suddenly found himself forced into a corner. He no longer had any space to his sides for him to dodge.

Randt shouted loudly, "Young Master Seth! Stop dodging!"

'Whoop!' He swung his sword straight down as he shouted.

When Rody was at the academy, he was among the more outstanding students. He was also never this angry when sparring with his classmates. He had suppressed his anger as he dodged. However, now that he was no longer able to dodge, he began to lose his patience. He shouted out, "Who is dodging?"

Rody held his sword, gritted his teeth and blocked only to hear the sound of metal breaking. A fragment of his blade flew into the

sky and stabbed the ground when it landed.

Rody's face was flushed as if he was drunk and his hair was a mess. He looked at his broken sword.

Randt stopped attacking. He took a few steps back and lightly said, "Young Master Seth, you lose."

The surrounding warriors all sighed in relief. Fortunately, the large dim-witted man had not done anything outrageous. Although breaking Young Master Seth's sword would also put the master in a bad light, it was not as bad as chasing him around the training ground.

Carter sighed in relief, calming down. When he sent Randt out earlier he had been quite anxious. He was afraid that Randt would cause a great deal of trouble. The duel ending in such a manner was indeed a fortunate event.

Randt looked at Rody and lightly said, "Young Master Seth, your sword skill is still too weak."

Finishing his sentence, Randt shook his head and walked back.

Rody's face was red and he turned around to look at Miss Nicole's expression. He was most concerned about Miss Nicole's reaction. As a man, he was anxious about losing face in front of the girl he secretly crushed on.

Nicole's facial expression did not give away any of her thoughts, but her eyes showed a hint of disappointment.

Seeing Miss Nicole's disappointed look, Rody suddenly felt really upset.

"Wait!" Rody suddenly shouted out.

"N?" Randt turned around to look at him.

Rody's face was no longer red. It looked somewhat pale with an icy-cold expression.

"I have not lost!" Rody suddenly spat out these few words.

“What?” Randt frowned.

“I have not lost!” Rody gritted his teeth and repeated.

“Young Master Seth...,” Carter did not know what to say. He did not expect Young Master to suddenly throw a tantrum at this moment.

“You have already lost!” Randt coldly said. He did not like Young Master. He was a middle-ranked officer when he was in the army. However, he was sent to the Tulip Family to work as a guard due to his outstanding performance. In the eyes of others, it was a big glory to work for the God of War’s family. Due to the special status of the Tulip Family, only the elite in the army were selected as guards! To be selected meant that your strength was recognized by the military! On top of that, that person would be promoted when they returned to the army after a few years of service as the Tulip Family’s guards! However, Randt did not like it as much as others because he believed that soldiers should contribute to the glory of a battlefield instead of being watchdogs for some nobles!

That was why Randt came to the Tulip Family’s house with a heart full of resentment. He vented his resentment on self-improvement and made a breakthrough. He entered as a Grade 3 swordsman but he soon reached Grade 4 due to his efforts. It was an unexpected gain for Randt since he arrived at the Tulip Family’s house.

However, this did not mean that Randt liked to be a guard. The Young Master of the Tulip Family was a useless bum. Randt could not even care to glance at him. He found it extremely hard to accept leaving the barracks and the battlefield to guard this good-for-nothing bum.

Even though this bum had performed better this time and was not chased around the field, it was not enough to change Randt’s unfavorable opinion of him. Presently, this guy had clearly lost but insisted that he did not lose. This shameless behavior made Randt

look down on him even more.

Rody looked at Randt with disdain and said, “A warrior will never give up as long as there is still a sword in his hands! My hand is still holding the sword and I have not yet given up! How can you say that I have lost?”

Rody spoke with determination. His eyes stared straight at Randt without looking away.

Randt felt moved. Since when did this person become so strong-willed? The last time we fought, he just ran away screaming without a single shred of dignity. How did he suddenly become so brave today?

“In that case, what do you want?” Randt frowned. Although he was still resentful, he did not show it. After all, the other party was still his Young Master. On top of that, his words were not unreasonable.

“Continue! Until you knock me down or disarm me!” Rody held his head high as he looked at Randt unyieldingly.

Nicole, standing at the sidelines, suddenly had a strange feeling. Perhaps the difference between this guy and my little brother is courage.

“Fine!” Randt’s eyebrows did not move. He said in a low voice, “I agree! Let us continue!”

Carter frowned from the sidelines. He was upset with Randt's recklessness. If this reckless guy injured the Young Master, Carter would also have to bear a huge portion of blame!

“Are you ready? I am coming again! Young Master! I will not hold back! You better be careful! Your power is too weak!” Randt said lightly.

“Power?” Rody sneered and his voice was full of pride. “Randt, although you have great strength but,” his voice became louder, “do you even know what power is? You do not understand what

real power is!”

This remark made everyone present shocked.

Randt does not know what power is?

Is this some kind of joke? Randt was the strongest one among all of them! If they were to just compare strength, Randt was even stronger than Instructor Carter.

Besides, Young Master Seth just suffered a crushing defeat against Randt’s strength. What right did he have to say that Randt ‘does not understand power’?

“Hahaha!” Randt burst out laughing. He stared at Rody and said, “Young Master Seth, are you saying I do not know what power is?”

That remark was no longer courteous and his tone was no longer that of a subordinate speaking to his master.

“Yes!” Rody’s face was bright and stern. “You do not understand! You are just bigger and more muscular! That is brute force, not real power!”

Randt did not speak and merely looked at the playboy. He seemed to say: Come and try if you have the ability.

Rody’s face was expressionless. He gritted his teeth and took a deep breath while raising his half-broken sword.

The people in the training ground were all dumbfounded.

They saw Rody’s gaze narrow with his hands pointing the half-broken sword towards the sky. His legs were slightly apart.

Rody was not only a stubborn person. He also did not like to admit defeat. As he was agitated and weaker, he decided to use the strange technique shown by Master Autumn which he had practiced that night.

Rody’s posture seemed a little unsteady and his arms were still in pain. Randt’s previous thunder-like attack was no trivial matter. Not only was his sword broken but even his hands felt like it was

about to tear.

Everyone felt surprised that Rody's eyes seemed to have an unusual radiance.

They noticed that there was something strange about the playboy in front of them.

The surrounding air movement started to become strange, and the scene became even more shocking!

Rody's broken sword suddenly became the center of the entire space! Everything within the space seemed to merge into a distorted illusion. The surrounding air gradually moved faster as if it was being sucked in!

Randt's gaze gradually narrowed as he slowly stepped back.

Suddenly, Rody's eyes opened wide. His eyes glowed as if he was possessed by an evil spirit. He suddenly shouted, "Go!"

The broken sword in his hands suddenly struck out with unparalleled momentum. The light of the blade was too fast for Randt to figure out which direction it struck from.

"What is this?!" Randt roared in his mind.

The dazzling light on Rody's broken sword seemed to shoot out in the shape of a crescent. The light blade seemed to cause the air to flow around it. With the blink of an eye, Randt found the light blade already striking out at him.

Randt opened his eyes wide and shouted loudly, "Kill!"

After that, there was a large explosion!

In a split second, energy seemed to radiate all around them. When that kind of fierce energy is blown into a person's face, it would cause them extreme pain as if they were being slashed. The strong wind also blinded everyone. Noticing the perilous situation in time, Carter quickly moved in front of Miss Nicole to shield her from the blast.

After the explosion, the spectators looked at the middle of the training ground and was shocked!

Randt was holding the broadsword vertically at his chest in a defensive posture. However, in front of him was a circular-shaped translucent shield of air. It stubbornly withstood the slash of Rody's light blade.

The light blade then seemed to cut through the shield of air and made it disintegrate. The light blade also seemed to flash. The amount of power involved made Randt's whole body stagger back by two steps.

The 'chi' sound that followed did not stop. Some of the light also seemed to spread to the walls. Randt's entire body which includes his torso and legs were badly hurt as if they were cut by an invisible force. It was only thanks to his creation of the wall of air that he managed to withstand most of the power from the slash of the light blade.

The light gradually dispersed and the shield of air also seemed like it could no longer hold out. Randt was sweating and panting heavily. His broadsword was placed on the ground and he was completely exhausted.

At that moment, Randt was in an extremely awkward position. His neat uniform had been torn to pieces and he was almost naked. His body seemed to exude blood because he was full of injuries.

He seemed like he was about to collapse and was leaning on the broadsword to support himself. He also looked in amazement at Rody who was quite close to him.

Rody's appearance looked even worse. His eyes were closed and his complexion was pale. His whole body ached and he felt hollow. Although his mind seemed to roar, it was also empty.

On the other hand, Instructor Carter was a little dumbfounded.

Half Moon Slash!

Young Master Seth actually used the Half Moon Slash!

That is the master of swordsmanship's, Master Autumn's, Half Moon Slash!

Then there was also Randt. That crazy fellow was actually holding back as well! He actually already comprehended how to use fighting energy but did not expose his true strength up till now! This big guy would have continued to hide his strength if it was not because Young Master Seth used Master Autumn's unique skill, the Half Moon Slash.

My God!

That bungling oaf of a Young Master could actually use the Half Moon Slash!

And that large blockhead could actually use the fighting energy that could only be comprehended by Grade 5 swordsmen! That is only used by senior ranking swordsmen!

Rody looked at Nicole who was covering her mouth with both hands trying not to scream. His face displayed a proud smile as he whispered slowly, "I... did not lose!"

Suddenly there was a large sound as Rody's half-broken sword fell to the ground. Following that, Rody closed his eyes and collapsed onto the floor soon after.

"Ah!" Nicole gave a brief scream and quickly ran towards Rody...

Chapter 24: Skeleton Andy

Rody felt like he was levitating while feeling fatigued. After a long time, he opened his eyes and groaned.

What happened? Why am I here again?

His surroundings were dark. It made no difference whether Rody's eyes were opened or closed. He could not see anything, not even himself. Like the previous occasion, he also had no voice and could only control his thoughts and his motion.

Evidently, this was the same dark and empty place he 'dreamt' of the last time he was unconscious.

Wait a minute...

The last time I dreamt of this place, something strange happened. It felt like I could cut through the space in front of me to escape... Hm, that was definitely a strange dream... Cutting through space? It's not like I am God!

"It is so annoying to have this dream again... Why is it so dark? Give me a light!" Rody sighed in his heart.

This thought merely flashed through his head and, just like the last time, a huge candlestick appeared before him. The soft candlelight lit the place bright.

Huh?

Rody was frightened for a moment before he calmed down. He thought of his prior eerie experience in this situation.

Perhaps... anything I think of would appear in this weird dream?

Having such thoughts, Rody decided to put his idea to the test.

"I want a sword!"

A longsword immediately fell from the sky and landed in front of Rody!

Rody could not help but cheer in his heart!

This dream is awesome! I can get whatever I want! Ah... Unfortunately, it is just a dream. If only it was real.

Thinking of this, Rody had a strange idea!

I want... want... I want a beautiful woman! Rody could not help but think of it.

There was no response...

Still... no response...

Ah, whatever, it doesn't seem to work all the time... Rody thought in frustration.

"Hahahahaha!" A burst of laughter rang from the darkness. Rody's was startled. This laughter is somewhat familiar...

Before he could react, a white skeleton appeared in front of him.

"Ah!" Rody was caught off guard and ended up screaming.

"You fool! It is me!" the skeleton spoke in disdain.

"Are you... Andy?" Rody stared with wide eyes.

Andy's voice was full of disdain. My God. I really don't understand how this skeleton can speak! It doesn't even have a tongue! Was Dandong's sorcery really that strong?

Andy asked somewhat maliciously, "Boy, did you really think you were dreaming?"

Rody was shocked. "This is not a dream? Then what is this?"

Andy sighed and continued in a gentler tone, "This is where I sleep!"

"You sleep here?!" Andy almost jumped.

Madness! This is madness!

A skeleton's sleeping place? Is this hell? How did I get to hell?

Wait a minute...

“How can I converse with you? I thought I couldn't speak?”

Andy spoke with pity, “You’ve only just realized it? We are not really speaking. In fact, you cannot speak in this world at all. We are now only communicating through telepathy.”

Rody was confused and did not understand the meaning of Andy’s words. However, a thought immediately entered his mind.

Telepathy. That means he would know of whatever comes to my mind. Does that mean he would know about anything I think of? That does not seem to be good.

“There is nothing bad about it! In a way, this is my home! In my own place, of course, I would have a special ability!” Andy lightly said.

Rody sat down.

“Why am I here? I remember... I was fighting against that large fellow Randt... after that...”

Andy spoke in disdain as he continued the story and said, “After that, you for some reason decided to use a high-level skill that could only be used by high-ranked warriors. However, because your body could not handle that much energy, you fainted almost immediately. After that, your consciousness was sent here to me. Idiot.”

“Why do you know everything?”

Andy's expression was as if he rolled his eyes, that was, assuming his eyeballs were visible. “Naturally, I knew. As you wear master’s mask, there is a connection between us. I know your every move.”

Rody groaned painfully as he held his head with both hands and made a wry smile. “Alright, that is enough. My brain is already in a mess! I beg you, Andy, please tell me what is going on!”

Andy shrugged its shoulders. My God, a skeleton would actually shrug its shoulders. He looks really weird.

After that, Andy waved and a huge candlestick appeared. He then stretched out his hand and snapped his fingers.

Immediately, a large chair appeared.

The skeleton moved to the chair and sat down. He then stretched his waist and lazily spoke.

“Where do I start? This place is not your world. This is a space created by Master. Although, this is merely a simplified version. Haha!”

These words made Rody almost jump.

A created space?

Isn't that the same as God?

The theological book, <The Creation>, stated clearly that only God was able to create a world!

Did Dandong destroy another truth?

“Do not be so excited you idiot! Do you even want to listen to me?” Andy's tone showed some dissatisfaction. He casually waved his hands and Rody immediately felt a force on himself. He had wanted to jump but was pushed to sit on the floor.

“Master created this space as a place of refuge as well as a storage space. Do you realize that whatever you thought of would appear? That is wrong. The master had stored a lot of things here. You are now wearing master's mask which is used as the key to enter this place. Also, the body cannot come in here. Only your soul can come in here. Putting on this mask is to master the ability to open the entrance to this world! Understand? In simple words, this is just a storeroom.

“Storeroom...,” Rody smiled with tears. He did not know whether he should be laughing or crying. “To obtain a storeroom, he created this space...”

My God, this Dandong can already be regarded as the God of

Creation!

“That is why this is not a place where you can obtain anything you think of! As you have the mask, you can take out the things stored here for your own use! Those candles, as well as the sword in front of you, were some things the master had left behind. That is why you could take these out if you want to. As for beautiful women... Master Dandong did not store such things here. That is why you will never be able to find them here.”

“Control everything here...” Rody’s eyes shone. Although he was young he understood one thing. It seems I have obtained a priceless treasure.

“Then... during my battle, how did I manage to pull off that move? I should not have been able to do it with my current strength. Is this also because of the mask?”

“Of course not!” Andy shook his head. “What did you think Master’s mask was? Did you think you could become a master just by wearing it? If it was so simple... during those days, Master would not... N.....” Andy was agitated but soon become silent. It seemed like he remembered something. He then shook his head, changed his tone and slowly spoke, “I can see through your body. It seems that a high-ranked warrior left you some kind of power seed. That seed is constantly gathering power into your body. Although that power is weak, it is ‘real’ power! You used that power in desperation. Unfortunately, you are too weak. Whether it was your body or your power, you are still too weak! As a result, you fainted after using that skill once. Useless fellow. How pitiful.”

Although Rody could not see his own face, he knew he blushed at the moment.

“I... I am truly weak!” Rody remembered Randt’s swordsmanship and also the shield of air he used at the last minute. It was close to real power... It was ridiculous for Rody to have even dreamt of defeating him.

“That is also called real power? Don’t joke around! The guy you fought is also half-dead! That guy is not going to recover anytime soon! Real power is not something you guys can use at your level! Nn... Let me think... It has been a long time and my memory is fuzzy... To use real power, you must surpass Grade 5. To comprehend and use it properly, you must reach a higher grade. Perhaps a Grade 6 warrior by your standards. What were you thinking? Young fellow... just a bit of light and power and you are already half-dead. Can you even call this comprehending the power? There is a big difference... a really big difference...”

Andy’s tone was full of disdain.

Rody could not say a word.

It was true. At this moment, he was too weak. Master Autumn could use the technique with ease while he had to muster all his efforts to use it and he even ended up half-dead. Honestly, it was a disgrace.

“Boy, why have you stopped speaking?” Andy laughed.

“What can I say? I... am too weak,” Rody sighed.

Andy suddenly said, “It is not too hard if you want to become strong. Your body strength already contains real power. If you practice well, you would progress faster than others in the future.”

These words and Master Autumn’s were the same. Rody’s heart stirred and said, “Do you know of a way?”

“No!” Andy shook his head. “I am just a skeleton and not a master swordsman like you humans. In your world, a casual strike of the sword would break me apart...”

The small hope in Rody’s heart was immediately extinguished. This Andy bragged so much but in the end, he is also just a bungling oaf!

“A bungling oaf? Boy, you dare call me a bungling oaf?” Andy’s tone was a bit weird.

Rody was also a bit surprised. Shit! I forgot that in here, the other party can read my thoughts.”

Andy seemed to shout angrily and with a wave, something dropped in front of Rody.

“Boy! Take this! This is the lightsaber that Master left behind! If you use this sword properly, you would not need to be afraid of big-sized opponents and even other Grade 5 swordsmen. Hmph! I am a bungling oaf? If I used this sword, I won’t even be afraid of your Sacred Swordsman! I... I... I am the life created by the great Master Dandong! I am the world’s greatest... greatest... greatest skeleton!”

Rody was not stupid. He threw his sword away and quickly picked up the lightsaber from the floor.

The lightsaber had a peculiar shape. The hilt was transparent. A green-colored gem was encased at the tip of the handle. Rody drew out the sword from the scabbard. Even though it was only his consciousness that was here, he could still feel the coldness from the sword penetrating into his bones.

The sword blade was also transparent. It was not evident what the sword was made from. It looked like it was not made from any metal.

“Boy, get out!” Andy waved his hand. Rody felt the space around him distort as he felt himself being sucked out. Everything went dark and he blacked out...

Chapter 25: Amazing Rumours

Rody regained consciousness and once again found himself on a soft bed. It was clear that this was the playboy's room.

Rody's mouth turned into a wry smile. These few days, he had gotten used to inexplicably fainting and then waking up in another place.

He looked at the ceiling in a daze. His body was covered by a soft silky quilt. He was so comfortable it was as if he was floating in the clouds. If Rody had not suddenly remembered Andy's words, he would have been very complacent.

He subconsciously reached out with his hands to touch the sides of his body. Sure enough, on the right-hand side, there was a long sword. It was hidden under the quilt.

"Young Master Seth..." A very soft voice came from the foot of the bed. Rody raised his head and saw the beautiful maid that he had met a few times earlier, at the other end of the bed. Her hand held a cloth. Her face blushed as she looked at Rody.

Angel walked nimbly towards Rody and used the moist cloth to wipe Rody's face. Her hands were very gentle and careful as though she was cleaning precious jewelry.

The girl's body scent wafted into Rody's nose and he realized she was leaning too close to him. His mind started to run wild as he felt her soft hands wiping his face.

Just as Rody was about to reach out to embrace the girl's waist, his arm accidentally touched the hidden sword again. The piercing cold feeling startled him.

Rody immediately sobered up and kept his hand on the sword.

Rody sighed and cursed himself. He then looked at the beautiful young maid and she blushed. Sweat beads glistened on her forehead and the tip of her nose. She had been working hard

taking care of him all this while.

Rody thought to himself for a moment before stuttering, “N...Now... What time is it now?”

Angel seemed quite happy and smiled. “It is already past dinner time. Young Master Seth. The doctor had already seen you and said that you have no problems and just need to rest. Also, Miss Nicole said, if you are awake, she will wait for you to eat at the dining room. If you not feeling well, it is also alright to eat here. Just tell me to send her a message.”

Having said that, Angel looked at Rody, hoping that he would stay in the room.

Rody thought for a moment. Although he was interested in that charming young maid, he was afraid that Miss Nicole might need to discuss something with him, so he did not want to delay. Besides that, the person the young maid really liked was that playboy, not him, a silly boy. Thinking about it, he felt disappointed. Rody sighed and said, “Well, I am already better. Might as well go to the dining room.”

Angel was disappointed but obediently helped Rody get out of bed, and get dressed. She felt strange when she noticed Young Master Seth holding the sword in bed. However, she also knew that Young Master Seth had always acted strangely so she overlooked it.

Rody was curious and wanted to try out the strange sword he had obtained from Andy. However, the moment he left the room, he was guided by a servant to the dining room and was followed all the way there. Without any opportunity to use the sword, Rody carefully wore it on his waist and occasionally touched it with his hands.

When Nicole saw the servant leading Rody to the dining room, she felt a little bit nervous as she was startled today.

Although Nicole had been standing on the sidelines, she had felt the full power of the sword strike that Rody had executed at the end of the match. As a sorcerer, she had no doubt that the sword skill displayed by Rody was the legendary 'real power'! It was no longer the simple fighting energy used by high ranking warriors! As for Randt, using his fighting energy to summon an air shield was totally unexpected. She felt he was certainly close to reaching Grade 5 swordsman. No matter where he would be placed in the Empire in future, he could already be considered a master. Yet he was fought to a draw by this boy. Rody's sudden outbreak of strength was incredible! Although Master Autumn had said that he had great potential, surely this was a frightening display.

My God... could it be that Master Autumn taught him that Half Moon Blade? Imagine, with just one slash, he could break Randt's air shield.

Nicole also knew that Randt was currently recuperating. That guy collapsed right after Rody but suffered more injuries compared to Rody! There were at least 21 wounds on his body! Some of the wounds were so deep that it almost reached his bones! After Randt fainted, his body lost all of his fighting energy. Without the energy to suppress his injuries, the wounds immediately started to bleed and the whole body turned bloody! The doctor said he was unlikely to recover well enough to get out of bed within the next fortnight.

As for Rody, although he had also fainted, it was just that he had overexerted and was just exhausted. As long as he rested enough he would recover.

In other words, Rody had no injuries. He had only lost a sword.

All the other warriors, including Instructor Carter, were all dumbfounded by the outcome of the fight!

Everyone believed that even Instructor Carter would not be able to injure Randt that much and yet remain almost unharmed!

When did this infamous bungling oaf of a Young Master become

so strong?

For a while, the warriors exchanged a lot of comments. These warriors were all elites in the army. These so-called elites, to put it rudely, were also rascals. What good could come out of their babbling mouths? In the end, those words reached the ears of the muddleheaded stablehands and the rumors became even more ridiculous.

“Do you know? Young Master Seth was possessed by a spirit today! He caused severe injury to a Grade 4 swordsman!”

“Let me tell you, Young Master Seth has mastered the legendary ‘Buddha’s Palm’!”

“Hey, what are you talking about! The sword technique that Young Master used... Obviously, he was using the ‘Ancient Devil’ technique, the ‘Destruction of Heaven and Earth to kill the Gods with Ten Thousand Sword and One Hundred and Eight Style’!”

“I heard that Young Master is not the Master’s real son! I heard that he is really a Super Saiyan! Today, he transformed and killed a Grade 4 warrior!”

“Don’t tell me, you haven’t heard? The Tulip Family is actually a vampire family! Today, Young Master was forced to show his real self! That is why he killed the guard!”

“Nonsense! Let me tell you, Young Master all along has hidden ability! With just a punch, he could actually blow out a parallel space!... Huh? What is parallel space? How would I know? Some author gave me this line...”

...

...

“Seth, come over here!” Nicole called out and smiled slightly at Rody. She was relieved. The boy seemed to have extraordinary vitality.

When Rody approached her, Nicole told him in a soft voice, “Remember. When someone else is around, you must address me as ‘sister’. Remember that!”

Rody glanced at Nicole before sighing and loudly said, “Yes! Sister!”

Rody’s voice sounded a bit helpless. When Nicole heard his helpless voice, her heart quivered slightly.

Nicole gently coughed twice and waved to Rody to sit down at the opposite end of the table.

This was the family’s private dining room. Although it was much smaller than the banquet hall at their home, Rody felt that this dining room was ridiculously big!

Naturally, ‘ridiculously big’ also applied to that long dining table!

This dining table was seven or eight times longer than the ordinary dining table in the Academy! On the middle of the table was also a large metal candlestick with more than 10 candles on it. It so happens that the large candlestick was also obstructing his view. He could not see Nicole, who was sitting opposite him.

More importantly, because the two were sitting at different ends of the table they could not talk. If they wanted to communicate, they would need to shout.

“Nicole... err... sister!” Rody almost shouted ‘Miss’ when he noticed a servant nearby and quickly changed his words.

“You fool!” Nicole voice suddenly rang in his ears. Rody was startled. How did she manage ... from so far away?

“Do not speak while eating! If you wish to say something, speak later! A real aristocrat should not speak with food in his mouth!” Nicole’s tone sounded like she was reproaching him. However, her innate gentle voice made it sound like it was a gentle rebuke between men and women. Strangely, Nicole was not shouting at the opposite end but merely moved her mouth subtly. Yet, Rody

was able to hear her voice clearly.

Rody did not dare reply to Nicole but his heart quietly spoke, “It seems that a sorceress is capable of many things.”

After dinner, Nicole’s words put Rody in a difficult position.

“You and I are going to see Randt! He had suffered severe injuries from you! As Young Master, you ought to go and see him! After all, he is the family guard!”

Rody was immediately taken aback. Heavily injured? That guy was really heavily injured? The skill I used was that powerful? Oh right, Andy had said that the guy would not be able to recover for at least a fortnight. But is it alright for me to go since I was the one who injured him...

After all, he was just a fake Young Master. He did not have the courage to go.

Nicole looked at Rody’s face and realized he was worried. She looked at him and whispered, “Don’t think of escaping. You definitely have to go. Now they are already beginning to have doubts because my brother was absolutely not that powerful. Now you should go and show your benevolence. More importantly, I have already thought of an excuse. That is why you must come out and personally explain.”

“What excuse?” Rody sighed and thought faintly. I am afraid my performance was too eye-catching.

Nicole rolled her eyes and curled her lips into a sly smile ...

Chapter 26: Feigned Illness

Randt was very badly injured. When Rody first entered the room, he had a strange feeling.

Did I really injure him this guy that much?

Randt, who previously stood like a giant, was completely wrapped in bandages. If not for his massive head which was not bandaged, he would have looked like the legendary mummy.

When Randt saw Nicole entering the room, he struggled to sit up. After all, he was just a lowly chief guard while Nicole was his master.

When he saw the figure behind Nicole, his eyes averted Young Master Seth's as he started to have mixed feelings.

That match..., nominally, he was the winner. However, he, the winner was currently bedridden and unable to get up while the loser was currently very much alive and well. Not to mention the fact that he was a bungling oaf and a playboy who had always been out looking for women.

Nicole said some words of encouragement to him. Randt blurted out, in reply, with whatever he could cope with as he was bad with words. Although he had won the fight, he felt depressed.

Randt forced a smile and waited for Nicole to finish before speaking, "Young Master Seth's skill has improved greatly. It is really surprising. Your subordinate concede defeat. Miss Nicole must be really gratified."

Nicole winked at Rody and he smiled wryly. With a calm expression, Rody stepped forward and explained, "That day, I was merely trying a skill that I learned recently, like that sword technique. If you asked me to use it again, I may not be able to. In other words, you are indeed stronger than me."

Nicole's eyes turned to Randt and she offered, "How about this

Randt. When you have recovered completely, you will become my brother's personal bodyguard. Your skills are good and if you follow him, I will not need to worry about him causing trouble all day."

Randt made a wry smile. "With this subordinate's ability, how could I catch up with Young Master?"

The smile on Nicole's face disappeared as she spoke, "The Tulip Family has 200 years of history. As heir to the Tulip Family, Young Master Seth certainly has his reason..."

Randt's heart immediately tightened. He was aware that his attitude was not right as the other party was his master. No matter what happened, he was only a guard. Even when he return to the army in the future and become a general, he would still be someone's subordinate. When Miss Nicole and Young Master visited him it was already an honor for him as well as a big face-giving gesture from them. If he kept on being unreasonable, it would no longer be a problem of conduct.

Realizing this, Randt respectfully said, "It's a heavy task that Miss Nicole has given me. I will certainly try to live up to Miss Nicole's expectations!"

The moment Rody left Randt's place he was relieved as he was not very confident of his impersonation as Seth. Fortunately, he was supposed to be the heir of the Tulip Family. Even if he did suddenly become stronger or if the others had doubts, they could only say that he was concealing his strength. After all, the Tulip Family have had 200 years of history and every generation had talented people.

Nicole brought Rody all the way back to the small building. When there were no more servants around Nicole reminded him, "Remember your identity. You are now my brother. No matter what, do not forget your identity and let others suspect you! Today, I have made Randt your personal bodyguard. Do you know

why?"

Rody shook his head.

"Idiot! Even if a person can change his face, he cannot change his voice, his expression, the way he talks and the way he walks. How can these change so easily? The past few days, the people you have come into contact with were those that do not normally come into contact with my brother. As a result, they were not able to see any difference! However, if you meet someone who is familiar with my brother, your current face would not be enough. I have long ordered my brother's original bodyguards to go back to the army. I am afraid that they are too familiar with my brother and you will be discovered! "

"Fortunately, my brother's normal behavior... that is... most of us do not like to approach him. That is why at the moment nobody has discovered you yet! In the future, when you return to the Academy, you will meet with the children from other aristocratic families that my brother usually mixed with. You will be discovered in no time!"

Rody retorted, "To begin with I am just an impostor."

Nicole raised her head and said, "I will coach you these few days. I have also declared that you will not be able to go to the academy during that time. After 3 months of training, you should be able to hide the truth from others... provided that you are not an idiot!"

Rody sighed and did not say anything.

Nicole thought to herself for a moment and walked to a cabinet. After searching for a while, she took out a silver bottle and gave it to Rody. "Drink this."

Rody took a quick look at the bottle and enquired, "What is it?"

Nicole sighed and explained in a soft tone, "This is a liquid medicine that I concocted. After drinking this, your whole body will heat up as if you are sick. You will recover in a few days and

after that, your voice would not sound the same as before. I thought of it before, that the biggest flaw is that your voice and my brother's voice are not the same. My little brother's voice is more delicate than yours. After drinking this, your voice would change a bit. Although there will still be some differences, we can say that you are still young and still at the growing stage. If anyone suspects anything, we can say that you grew up the past few months and your voice have changed.”

Rody sighed. He had reached a point where she would probably not tolerate him backing out. He took the bottle and drank its contents. It tasted somewhat sweet yet somewhat bitter.

Nicole had said that after drinking this medicine he would be ‘as if he was sick’. However, Rody soon found out that it wasn't so.

This was not ‘as if he was sick’. He was literally falling sick!

After Rody settled down in the small building. Nicole patiently taught him the habits and lifestyle of the playboy brother. After that, Rody read the books again. At nightfall, Rody returned to his room. But he did not feel right.

His whole body began to heat up. His head started to feel larger and his body felt like it was floating and weak. One of the maids was alarmed and quickly told Miss Nicole.

Nicole, of course, was aware that this would happen. She rushed to Rody in an ostentatious manner. However, she found Rody already unconscious in bed. She called the doctor to check on him and he said that Young Master was in weak health and having a fever. He prescribed some medicines for Rody.

For two consecutive days, Rody was in a daze. The people around him thought that Young Master was not in good health because of the injury he sustained the other day. The injury caused the disease and they could only wait.

Rody felt dizzy and his mind was not clear. His last thoughts

were: Shit! She tricked me again!

Chapter 27: Donkey Ears Exposed

In a daze, Rody felt his head gently supported and placed onto a warm and soft place. His nose and mouth then felt a sweet fragrance.

Someone then dabbed at his face with a wet towel. Rody was having a fever so the towel was cool, refreshing and comfortable. His tight eyebrows gradually relaxed.

His mouth was gently prised open. Immediately, a sweet and refreshing liquid entered his mouth. Although some of the liquid trickled out from the corners of his mouth, someone would immediately wipe it clean with a cloth.

He was not fully conscious, but he could feel the cool liquid going through his mouth and into the stomach. It felt like his body, burning-hot like a raging fire, was being placed onto an ice block. The comfortable feeling reached his bones and Rody groaned in comfort.

Then someone sponged his hot forehead with a wet towel. The effect was so relaxing and comfortable that he gasped.

Two small and warm hands started to gently stroke his face. From his head to his eyebrows, and then to the eyes, nose, and mouth... and then the hands clasped the face and slowly slid down both the sides. Finally, the hands gently touched Rody's ears.

Rody, still in a daze, felt his ears, which had been covered by the ear-muffs, suddenly unfold and hang loose. The long ears, which had for many days been cramped tight, finally found relief from the constant pressure. The sudden release, that slight ache, and relief made Rody shake his head.

“Ah!!!”

A short and surprised scream sounded followed by the clattering sound of something being knocked down. As a result of the loud

clatter, Rody finally woke up. The lethargic boy slowly opened his eyes as the silhouette in front of him gradually became clearer. His eyes focussed on the person in front of him.

A beautiful maid was tightly holding a towel in one hand while looking at him with a surprised face. Her eyes showed disbelief and fear.

On the floor beside the bed was an overturned golden container. The water inside had spilled.

Rody subconsciously felt not too good. He soon understood those eyes... the other party's gaze...

That beautiful young maid was looking with a dumbstruck expression... at the long rabbit ears on his head!

Rody's face suddenly turned pale. He became so afraid that he immediately regained almost full consciousness. His whole body also started to sweat.

"Young Master Seth..." Angel was already starting to weep. "Your... your... your ears..."

Finished! The biggest secret has been exposed!

This was the first thought that came Rody's mind.

What to do now?

Rody was slow in his response. Moreover, he was sick. He struggled for a solution.

He could not just kill her right?

Angel's eyes were already red. She could not imagine that the playboy, the handsome and charming Young Master she was fascinated with, had a pair of terrifying long ears. Those were not human ears! Don't tell me, the Young Master is not human?

Angel was terrified and seemed like she was about to scream.

"This... Don't scream, yet!" Rody quickly spoke. His first words

had startled him. His voice had become heavier and more mature. However, this was not the time to worry about his voice.

“Young Master...,” Angel was so terrified, she could only remember these two words.

“Softer!” Rody tried to support his weak body and sit up but no matter how he struggled, he could not muster the strength.

Angel’s love and affection for him finally overcame her psychological fear. She walked a few steps forward and carefully helped Rody to sit up. But, she then quickly retreated a few steps back.

Rody did not know whether to laugh or cry. He lowered his voice and said, “Do not be afraid. About this ears... It's a long story... You... you must definitely not tell the others!”

“Umm...,” Angel subconsciously nodded her head. It was a conditioned response. As a servant, whatever the master said, they would immediately nod. However, as she did that, she retreated a few steps as well.

Rody sighed. In fact, he did not care that the beautiful maid was looking at him in fear. Rody’s original Yin Yang face would not have fared any better. Since young, he had often experienced that kind of stares. That was why he was not really angry with the way the young maid looked at him.

“Do not worry... I am not a monster... I will also not harm you,” Rody whispered as softly as he could.

Reassured, Angel calmed down a little bit. After all, she was attracted to this man. Although the initial panic had almost gone, she was still surprised. She inquired, “Young Master Seth... but your ears..”

Rody's brain churned at high speed as he looked for a plausible excuse to calm the maid. He said, "Come over here. I will tell you. Just... be sure not to scream..." Pausing for a moment, he

remembered that the maid seemed to be afraid of Nicole. So he added, "If you shout and the others find out Ni... my sister will punish you!"

That worked as Angel looked fearful but walked forward.

Rody racked his brains and dished out some baloney. "This ear? It is a secret... Nicole..." The moment he mentioned her name, he felt a bit resentful. These hateful ears, wasn't it her fault to begin with?

Thinking that way, he blurted out, "This is actually the Tulip Family's secret. Our family members are born with such ears. We normally hide them so that others do not know. This is inherited from the blood of the family! It is congenital!"

This statement was hardly credible. However, not so for Angel.

Members of Tulip Family had such rabbit ears? This is bizarre, right? Never seem to have heard about it before...

However, come to think of it, this matter is not something to be proud of. It is also not something one wish to make public. Obviously, one would do anything to hide it. Didn't Young Master say that this is a 'family secret'?

Moreover, the Tulip Family has 200 years of reputable history. In these 200 years, nobody knows how many eccentric people were born into this family. Compared to the common people, they would naturally have 'a lot of areas that are different'.

The young maid was silent. However, her facial expression revealed that she only believed a part of it.

Rody looked at her and felt relieved. He continued to comfort her. "I did not lie to you. Just to let you know, my sister, also have a pair of... rabbit ears. It is just that her hair was so long it normally covers her ears. If you don't believe me, the next time you are with her, brush aside her hair to take a look!"

Rody felt guilty. Although this young maid was easily deceived,

she did not seem to have the courage to actually brush aside Nicole's hair to look at her ears.

Sure enough, Angel now looked more convinced.

Rody hastily continued. "I have let you in on this secret but you must not let others know! The things I have said, you must also not let my sister know too! If not... I am afraid... afraid that she might beat you until your buttocks 'blossom' (punish)!"

Rody said that but in his heart, he thought: If Nicole were to find out that I said that she also has long rabbit ears, I am afraid that the one that will end up with a 'blossoming' buttocks will be me.

Although there were many flaws in his statements, they were sufficient to just deceive that young girl. On top of that, Angel had an amiable bond with the Young Master and believed most of what he had said. Although there was still some panic and fear, she had mostly calmed down.

Without a word, Angel quickly picked up the golden container and carefully wiped the floor with a cloth. After that, she packed the container and left.

Rody hurriedly reminded Angel to keep this matter a secret and she quietly agreed.

After settling that young maid regarding his secrets, Rody felt relieved. However, he was still worried about his rabbit ears. They could too easily be discovered. He had to think of a way to conceal them properly.

Or else, he could ask Andy for help. Since Andy was a creation left behind by that old fellow Dandong, he should be able to find a way out.

Rody now had a little less respect for Dandong, the creator of the mask, because his stupid 'God's Smile' transformed his face into his current absurd face.

After Rody had rested for a few days, he gradually recovered.

Angel's panic and fear have also subsided. After the initial panic, the young maid had different thoughts. He even let me in on his secrets. This shows that I have a different place in his heart...

Every day, Angel carefully and gently took care of Rody. She was a little bit guilty about her fears the other day. Angel had a soft and kind heart. She was empathetic and knew that a person with such long ears would not feel happy about it. Her fear the other day had undoubtedly hurt her Young Master's feelings. Her guilty conscience made her decide to serve Rody more gently than usual. She silently gazed at Rody, with her gentle eyes, causing Rody's heart to quicken.

Chapter 28: The Lying Skeleton

The past few days were the most wonderful Rody ever had. Every day, a beautiful girl would wait upon him attentively. Her words and actions indicated her tremendous affection for Rody. Every day, he just stayed in bed to rest. He also had the leisure to read books.

The original owner of the room, that playboy, actually had a lot of books. That changed Rody's opinion of that playboy slightly. This did not mean that Rody liked him and had forgotten his resentment. Rody has not forgotten that the playboy was to blame for his current misfortune: getting captured by Miss Nicole and being forced to impersonate him. He still felt like cursing every time he remembered being tricked by the playboy and getting kicked by the horse until he fainted.

However, he realized that the playboy was not a bungling oaf after all.

His collection of books, which included various strange subjects, showed that the playboy was at least not an ignoramus. In his collection, the subjects ranged from poems to mythology and from notes on flowers to the work of famous scholars. He even had a lot of books on architecture, medicine, and divination.

Naturally, as the heir to the Empire's God of War's family, he had among his collection a lot of books on Empire's military strategies. Some of the books were even written by the Tulip Family's ancestors.

Rody's days were spent reading in bed. When he got tired of reading, he slept. The entire time, he was taken care of by the beautiful maid. Even when he ate, he did not even need to move his hands as she would spoon-feed him.

The more Rody looked at those books, the more surprised he became. The playboy was unexpectedly knowledgeable.

The playboy left a lot of notes in the books. It seemed he was not just browsing the books. However, there were so many books and almost every one of the books have detailed notes. The subjects studied were really too varied and complex.

Naturally, there were some books that the playboy had not studied meticulously. For example, the books on military strategies looked clean and relatively brand-new. The owner seemed to have ignored them. Maybe he disliked military books.

Instead of idling, Rody devoured the books, making sure not to miss the scribbled notes. Rody had always liked studying and been willing to work hard. Compared to the things he had learned in the Academy, the material in the books here was much more interesting.

With the young maid who knew his secret guarding the front door of the room, Rody was not afraid of anyone else suddenly breaking into the room. When he was alone in the room, he would let his long ears hang loose as it had been folded the entire day causing an uncomfortable ache. If the other servants wish to come in, they would be turned away. Every time he and the young maid were alone in the room together with his ears exposed, she would look at his ears with a mischievous expression. That look made Rody feel gratified. It was because this was the first girl he knew who did not jeer or ridicule him for his unusual appearance.

Miss Nicole would visit Rody once a day. However, she would come and go in a hurry. She looked very imposing but having seen that Rody had not fully recovered, she did not say anything. Normally, Miss Nicole was someone impatient and expected improvements in a hurry. If Seth were here instead, she would have constantly rebuked him.

Occasionally, when the two of them were alone together, she would quietly warn Rody to be careful. Rody had fallen to her schemes before and ended up with the donkey ears. The last time it happened, he ended up with a serious illness. At first, he resented

Nicole, but when that beautiful girl approached him and whispered into his ears, the unhappiness disappeared. He was now quite infatuated with Nicole, especially since the night he got his first kiss. Dreams and fancy illusions were indeed not lacking in his sleep. He dared not mention this to anybody.

On the seventh day, Rody finally recovered. That day after he got up, Angel immediately waited upon him and then dressed him. She even helped him to cover up his ears with the ear muffs. After combing his hair, the young girl tied Rody's hair into a small braid to make him look more gentlemanly.

Angel, who had personally taken care of Rody these days, grew more familiar with him. She was secretly happy that her Young Master, who was known to be flirtatious, would occasionally show some interest in her. He would flatter her or maybe tease her. The past few days, she was secretly delighted because she had the opportunity to stay close by Young Master's side. She felt that Young Master seemed different from before. He seemed to be more honest and she considered that as part of the illness. As for Rody, although he was an honest guy, he still loved to show off in front of a beautiful girl. Especially when her beauty could make normal guys like him go crazy. As the two became more familiar with each other, Rody also started treating the young maid kindly and flatter her to dispel her doubts.

After he had put on his clothes, he sent Angel out of the room and carefully closed the door. Alone in the room, the first thing he did was to take out and closely inspect the sword which he obtained from the skeleton, Andy.

Although Rody had been unhappy with Andy, he was glad that Andy had given him the precious sword. It must have some sort of magical capabilities. Taking advantage of the fact that there was nobody around, Rody took out the sword and examined it. Immediately, he knew he was holding a treasure.

In the daylight, the transparent color of the blade was dazzling.

The sharp edge of the blade reflected brilliant rays of light. With the sword in his hands, Rody waved it randomly a few times and then worked through a few swordsman techniques a few times. He felt, more and more, that the weight and the length of the sword were perfect for him. His was excited and could not wait to try out the weapon with someone.

He grew up in a poor family so he had never had such an amazing weapon. To warriors like him, precious weapons like these were more valuable than jewelry.

I wonder how sharp this sword is. Since it was given by the skeleton, it cannot be too terrible, right?

Out of curiosity, he walked to a nearby wall to look and then took one of the swords hanging there.

Although the previous owner of the room did not like weapons, it was still the God of War's house. They would naturally use weapons for decoration.

Rody took the 'lightsaber' in one hand and the ordinary sword in the other. He took a deep breath and then clashed the two weapons hard against each other.

Ding!

With a crisp sound, a piece of a blade fell onto the floor!

One sword was unable to withstand the hard clash. The moment the swords clashed, a section of that sword fell in front of Rody.

Rody was shocked by what he saw. His expression was as if he had swallowed a fist in one mouthful. He was horrified.

The weapon that broke was not the ordinary sword he took from the wall but the 'lightsaber' given to him by Andy, one of Dandong's treasures.

“No way!”

Rody screamed half a day later...

Chapter 29: Rich Folk's Evening Banquet

“That skeleton! He dares to lie to me!” Rody cursed.

What kind of treasure is this? The damn skeleton had claimed that with this sword in hand, I would not need to fear Grade 4 or Grade 5 swordsmen. He even said that if he had this sword, he would not fear the Sacred Swordsman. Such an arrogant braggart... Luckily, I did not use this sword to fight anyone and risk my life. Otherwise, there is no need for a Sacred Swordsman, even a Grade 3 swordsman is strong enough to kill me... isn't it so? In any duel, if the opponent attacks, this sword will not only be unable to block anything, the user will also be likely to be split into two.

Rody was so angry that he immediately threw the absurd sword on the floor. He wanted to trample on it but changed his mind when he saw the transparent blade flashing from the floor.

Rody sighed. “Whatever. It seems this sword still has some value and can be sold. At the very least, I don't think that the gem on the handle is fake.”

Thus, although reluctant, Rody picked up the broken sword and hanged it up carefully. However, he angrily kicked the broken fragments on the floor, until they were under the bed.

For the rest of the day, Rody felt depressed. Even, later, when Angel came to accompany him, he had no interest in her laughter.

The depressed Rody did not know that somewhere else, someone was raging.

“Stupid! Fool! Idiot! Retard! He used the precious sword to carelessly cut scrap metal! My lightsaber! Master's treasure! This kid is a fucking son of a bitch!”

At that moment, if anyone were present, he would have been scared to death. Have you ever seen a raging skeleton stamping his

feet while shouting curses into the heavens?

In the evening, while Rody was still distressed about the sword, Nicole quietly walked into the room. Only when she had stopped in front of Rody, was he finally aware of her presence and he stared at her.

That night, Nicole was wearing a splendid attire. Her charming body was wrapped in a fitting white evening dress. It exposed her white shoulders and thin neck. She looked like an elegant and noble swan. Her golden hair was tied into a knot and scattered on her shoulders. The combination of the snow-white skin and the blonde hair made her look very captivating.

“What are you thinking about? You look like you are in a trance,” Nicole asked, with a slight smile.

Rody used a great deal of his willpower to control his gaze and to make sure he did not look at Nicole’s chest. However, he failed. When Nicole walked to his side to talk to him, she inadvertently and bent over slightly.

Rody blushed as he faltered. “N... No...What!”

Nicole became aware of Rody’s blushing face and immediately realized why he stuttered. Her face turned red and she cursed in a whisper, “Little lecher! Thinking of funny ideas again.” She immediately stood up and moved back two steps.

Rody did say anything but thought to himself: What is this? Anyway, I have already seen everything I wanted to, that night.

Naturally, he absolutely could not say that out loud.

Nicole, with her pink cheeks, was looked charming. She glanced around the room then looked at Rody and said, "Get ready. We are going out tonight."

“Going out?” Rody was startled.

Nicole took a deep breath and elaborated, “Tonight, we will

attend a small banquet. It will be a study for you. Of course, you do not need to worry. No one will expose you in this banquet. None of the participants are people familiar with my brother. Most of them have not even met my brother. So, I decided to take you to this banquet to improve your knowledge of noble banquets and etiquette. When you masquerade as my brother in the future, you will inevitably need to be familiar with these things.”

Rody immediately tensed up. He felt like his head got larger.

Attend a banquet with nobles? That was something unexpected. He thought that all he needed to do was to pretend to be Nicole's brother, practice hard his swordsmanship, get through the training and then pass the examinations. He had not expected so much trouble.

“This... can I not go?” Rod cautiously asked.

“Of course not!” Nicole refused. She then called out to Angel and instructed her to help Rody get dressed.

The clothes needed would naturally be those left behind by that playboy. Angel skillfully picked a few clothes from the wardrobe, meant for banquets. However, Rody pulled his face into a grimace the moment he saw those clothes.

As a warrior, Rody felt that warrior's clothes were better. He was more accustomed to simple warrior's clothes.

However, the playboy's preference in clothes was clearly different from Rody's.

Angel very quickly found him a new set of noble's clothes.

“What kind of clothes are these?” Rody sighed.

The clothes were complicated. Its collar was wrinkly and had a floral shape. The outer garment was decorated with a few silver chains which would sway when one move about. There was a simple shoulder strap on the shoulder area of the outer garment. As the playboy was not yet of age, the shoulder strap had no

military insignia attached to it. Instead, the family crest was embroidered on it with golden threads. The sleeves were more ingenious with designs decorating the wrist area in a circle such that they looked like bracelets. The thin pants made Rody feel awkward as both sides of the pants had decorative folds.

“This is not a man's clothing!” Rody whispered to himself when he saw his neatly dressed reflection in the mirror.

Angel looked surprised and softly said, “Young Master Seth... but these are your favorite clothes... you even personally designed them.”

Nicole immediately looked at Rody and motioned for him not to say anything unnecessary.

Rody was afraid and no longer dared to speak.

Nicole smiled and looked at Rody with a satisfied face. In the past, when her brother wore these clothes, she had always found that he looked weak and delicate. However, this same set of clothes, for some reason, seemed to highlight Rody's strength. Maybe this was because Rody was truly a warrior.

Nicole then dragged Rody, who looked like he was about to face execution, out of the mansion. She dragged him until they reached the main gates of the mansion. It was after Nicole gave Rody a stern look, warning him, that Rody immediately boarded the carriage.

This carriage and the carriage she rode on the night Rody attacked, were different. The body of this carriage was painted black, but it was still shiny in the night. The paint used must be unusual. The passenger compartment was spacious, enough even for a few people to lay down side by side. It also had soft velvet cushions that made you feel like you were sitting on clouds.

Six white horses were pulling the carriage. A halter was placed on each horse's head. The halters had patches that blindfold the

horses' eyes as well. A white feather was also placed at each of their heads, giving them a dignified air and pompous appearance.

The old horseman, Mark, was also neatly dressed. He sat in the driver's seat, holding a whip.

On both sides of the carriage were another 4 horses each led by a guard. Leading them was the bearded Instructor Carter.

Rody sighed. Now, this is the noble's pomp. Why did Miss Nicole only have one horseman with her while using that path that night? If it were not for that, we would not have accidentally attacked her.

When the old horseman lightly whipped the horses, the six well-trained horses, in unison, started to run and pull the carriage. Ting, ting, ting... The bells on the carriage rang as the carriage started to shake. Rody knew he was on his way.

The four guards quickly mounted on their horses. Two went to the front to lead the way while the other two followed at the sides of the carriage. The guards had a majestic air as they rode on their horses with their torso held straight and alert eyes.

Rody was tense the moment he was in the carriage. It was not just because he needed to attend the banquet for nobles but also because he was sitting extremely close to Nicole in the dark carriage.

Nicole did not notice Rody's restlessness as she continued to explain to him the etiquette of nobles at the banquet. She was thankful the playboy was unconventional. Even if Rody made mistakes later, he would not draw any suspicion.

Rody felt like the entire carriage was filled with Nicole's fragrance. That evening, Nicole had used a perfume that Rody was not familiar with. Rody gently sniffed the fragrance. Combined with Nicole's beauty and her delicate voice, Rody's thoughts strayed.

Nicole did not notice anything. When she finished coaching Rody, she thought for a moment. Then her face turned serious as she cautioned, “You might meet someone during the banquet. You must remember, no matter what, do not provoke this person!”

Chapter 30: Stuck in Gilded Party

The banquet was held in the countryside, in a villa of another great noble. It was a private and unofficial gathering for the nobles.

Outside the villa, the road was full with all kinds of exquisite carriages. Some men and women dressed in luxurious clothes were milling around the carriages.

The villa was not very big but it had a moderately sized banquet hall. There were only slightly more than 30 people at the banquet. Nicole carefully held Rody's arm and slowly walked into the hall. Immediately, an attendant respectfully came up to them. With an elegant move of his hand, he helped Nicole take off her shawl. He then announced in a melodious tenor voice, "The Tulip Family's Miss Nicole and Young Master Seth has arrived."

Rody immediately felt numerous eyes look towards him. That was the first time he had seen so many nobles together. Not just that: they were high-ranking nobles. It was also the first time he was stared at by so many nobles.

Some of the stares came with respect. That definitely was due to the prestige of the 'Tulip Family'. There were those with envy. That came mostly from nobles with slightly lower status and position. There were also stares accompanied with a slight smile. That came from families with good relationships with the Tulip Family. Of course, some of the stares were not friendly. Some of them had malicious intentions, looking to take advantage of the current predicament of the Tulip Family. The family's influence was fading because their heirs had failed to live up to expectations. Their only talented and useful member was a daughter who could not inherit the family title.

Invariably, there were many young ladies looking at Rody. Rody's costume that night was refined and chic. Along with the playboy's

handsome face and the shining blond hair of the Tulip Family, it somehow attracted some favorable attention. To the young ladies, Rody's evasive looks made him seem shy. In fact, he looked cute to the ladies and that was contrary to the rumors of the playboy being very good with women.

Nicole calmly smiled and quietly greeted her friends. Her light and cheery smile was like a fresh breeze. She quietly coached Rody about the people present. She was telling him which ministers His Majesty recently favor, who came from which famous families, and their family's allies. Rody could not remember them all. He could only understand about two-thirds and maybe only remember about one-third of all that he heard.

As it was not a formal banquet, only a small buffet was arranged. The guests gathered in separate groups according to their own familiar circles. Nicole brought Rody along with her to greet all the groups. She did not linger too long or engage in deep conversation with any group or treat them coldly. Occasionally, a young noble infatuated with Nicole would attempt to strike a conversation with her. Nicole would politely respond. She certainly did not have the appearance of the terrifying sorceress that had made Rody miserable and silent previously.

Rody nervously kept following behind Nicole but Nicole wanted to train him and urged him, "Go mix around by yourself. Be careful. Do not forget the common courtesy I taught you on our way here." She then walked away with a few female companions.

Rody was thinking of going up to a group of girls but a few of those girls had started heading for the inner rooms. Rody was too embarrassed to follow them. He ended up standing there like an idiot.

A waiter offered him some wine in a cup made of pure gold. The wine that was as red as blood made Rody hesitate to drink.

He did not feel comfortable at the banquet, but that was not the

case in the eyes of others. For the noble ladies interested in him, his actions only confirmed that he was not an ordinary person. He was handsome and came from an illustrious family. Was there anyone more suitable as a wealthy husband?

Of course, soon after that, Rody was surrounded by several noble ladies.

It is said that a skillful man knows how to strike up a conversation with a woman. However, this applies equally to women.

Within a short period of time, two noble ladies had 'accidentally' dropped their handkerchiefs in front of Rody. Three others had 'hurriedly' opened their folding fans and dropped them and another one 'accidentally' tripped on her skirt. She almost fell on top of him.

Rody remembered the instructions of his fake sister and acted accordingly. He picked up the dropped handkerchiefs and folding fans and carefully returned them to their owners. As for the lady who almost fell into his embrace, Rody was startled and hastily dodged. That noble lady almost fell onto the floor.

Rody had a headache because these ladies kept following him. Even though he had picked up and returned their belongings, they still stood by his side and refused to leave. They insisted on engaging in idle talk with Rody.

Rody was not good at conversations. Since young, he had not talked much to girls except Miss Nicole and the beautiful young maid at home. He felt uncomfortable having to deal with so many ladies so suddenly.

The noble ladies were all trying very hard to get close to him. Rody was alarmed. It was not because he was not romantic. Men don't need to be taught such things. It was that he never needed to deal with girls before and also now there were just too many ladies. He was also nervous and afraid to make any mistake. He already

felt like he was treading on thin ice, so how could he focus on conversing with women?

Besides that, only two of the women were attractive. However, Rody could see Nicole and Angel, two even more enchanting beauties, at home every day. It was quite natural that these noble ladies did not look interesting to him. Moreover, he was also a little attracted to Miss Nicole right now.

Although Rody was 'suffering' unspeakably from being surrounded by girls, in the eyes of many, he was in an enviable situation. Most of them sighed at the extraordinary skills of the Tulip Family's Young Master, while some of those from powerful families were jealous of him.

“Seth. It seems like you and these ladies here are happily chatting,” A treacherous voice said. It came from a slender youngster with a fair and clear complexion.

With a warrior's instinctive vigilance, Rody immediately felt the ill will coming from the other party.

Rody recognized him as the nephew of the Military Minister of the Empire. This Military Minister was in charge of logistics and supplies, an extremely cushy job. However, their relationship with the Empire's Marshal family had always been tense.

Rody remembered that because when Nicole coached him earlier, her tone became heavier when she was emphasizing her explanation about this family. That had left a deep impression of that family on him.

Rody sighed, nodded and faintly said. “Your Excellency. I do not think I know you!”

The other party showed a hint of displeasure. He was the nephew of the Military Minister. Besides that, the minister had no son. As a result, he was established as the official heir of the family and the moment he returned to the Imperial Capital, he became an

influential figure. When Rody said that he did not know him, it clearly meant that Rody did not respect him.

However, his expression immediately calmed down as he held his wine cup. He smiled and said. "I am Milo of the Lionheart Family. I was sent to the north this year to help His Majesty manage the military affairs in the north and to further develop the Imperial Capital. Come to think of it, we have never officially met."

His sentence was sarcastic and had a hidden meaning. It meant that he was appointed by His Majesty as a Military Minister while Rody was just a playboy. So, of course, they had not met.

The ladies stood quietly at the side. They naturally knew Milo's identity. In fact, if Rody was not present, Milo would be their target as a wealthy husband. Among them were two clever ladies who also knew that these two families were not in harmony with each other. They also knew that Milo was trying to find show off his superiority over him. Milo was now holding the military power of a minister. He was also held in high esteem by His Majesty. On the other hand, Young Master Seth may be the Young Master of the Tulip Family, but, he was not yet an adult and could not even get the inheritance. As a result, they were worried for the delightful youngster.

Rody felt awkward. He also knew that the other party came here looking for trouble. He did not understand the sarcasm in the other party's earlier remark. As he had only started impersonating the Young Master recently, he was far from perfect in his role. His poor impersonation had somehow caused some discord between that big shot and himself. The feeling was kind of weird.

At that moment, a flirtatious voice sounded out.

"Lord Milo, Young Master Seth. The two of you seem very close. What are you talking so happily about?"

The voice seemed to come from a distance and yet sounded like it was just close by. It was a gentle, indulgent voice like that of a

lover's.

Chapter 31: Peerlessly Charming

A graceful woman walked up to them. Her fully made-up face smiling; her youth showing in her eyes as she glanced around. Although she was not as beautiful as Nicole, the way she walked, moved and talked carried a seductive air.

She had long red hair which was tied into a knot. Her languid appearance also made others feel languorous. Even her dress was more refined compared to all the other women who were present.

She wore an unusual sleeveless bright red dress. Her long and thin skirt trailed on the floor. Somehow, the skirt highlighted her long straight legs. The skirt was deliberately tightened at the waist to show off her slender waist. With every step she took, the eyeballs of the men present grew wider till they almost popped out. The most exaggerated part was the back of her dress which was bare. It was just held together by a few thin strings from around the neck, revealing her fair skinned back. That bold dress attracted the attention of countless men and earned the hatred and envy of other women.

Without a doubt, she was an unrivaled beauty.

The moment Milo saw this woman, he was stupefied and he murmured, “Miss Jojo...You...” The cocky and arrogant fellow even lost his ability to speak.

Rody stared, enraptured but he suddenly remembered Miss Nicole’s remarks.

“At the banquet, you may meet someone. Remember, you must never provoke that person! That person’s name.... is Jojo!”

Although Rody and the other men were attracted to the extremely alluring woman like a magnet, Rody who still had a trace of rationality left, remembered Miss Nicole’s warning. His facial expression slowly returned to normal. Of course, he still

could not help but stare. It would be a miracle if he could control his eyes when a seductive beauty was standing right in front of him.

The charming woman, Jojo did not seem to mind the stares. In fact, she had experienced the same kind of stares everyday. At that moment, she smiled gently while staring at Milo's face. "Lord Milo, what topic of interest are you talking about? May I listen in as well?"

Jojo seemed to have the innate talent of using her nasal voice. Her charming tone of speech appeared to even pierce through bones. With one gentle sentence, Milo was weakened to the bone.

"No... nothing... but Miss Jojo... if you want... I can slowly tell you about some of my interesting experiences in the North."

At that moment, Milo was no longer looking for trouble with Rody. After all, pleasing Miss Jojo was much more important than bullying the famous playboy! After all, the playboy was just a useless person who relied on his family background. On the other hand, Milo had gained His Majesty's favor and had military power. In comparison, the playboy was not a threat.

Rody stood aside and saw that Milo finally stopped paying him attention. He then felt greatly relieved. At that point, a few of the noble ladies who were out-shined by Jojo's brilliant presence also grew pale and boring. They had no choice but to go elsewhere. Rody wanted to leave too but the moment he took a step, Jojo saw him and suddenly spoke, "Young Master Seth, are you not interested in our topic of conversation?"

For some reason, when Jojo glanced at Rody, his face turned red. Rody, alarmed, quickly lowered his eyes to avoid eye contact. However, the moment Jojo made that statement, Rody could no longer leave. He could only stand at the side awkwardly while listening to Milo's and Jojo's conversation.

Milo was actually quite eloquent. Jojo giggled occasionally,

listening to him talking about the strange sceneries and news of the North. To be able to win the interest of that beauty, Milo was definitely in extremely high spirits compared to Rody who was standing quietly at the side.

Jojo's cheerful expression slowly turned serious while her gaze towards Milo slowly became gentler. It was as if her big eyes were about to tear. Rody was starting to feel disgusted in his heart and thought to himself.

Don't tell me all women are fools? That Milo seems to be getting carried away. Which part of him is attractive?

Suddenly, Jojo stepped a wee bit nearer Milo. She looked at Milo's eyes and slowly asked, "Lord Milo, there is something that I need to request from you. Please do not refuse me."

The moment Milo heard this, he straightened himself. "Miss Jojo, do not worry! Just say what you need! Although the world is large, there are not many things in this world that I cannot do!" he proudly exclaimed.

This was natural as his family was amazingly powerful. His own uncle was the Military Minister and one of His Majesty's most trusted subordinate. He also controlled an entire section of the military and was an extremely important person. It could be said that he was very influential indeed. His words were not exactly too far off the mark. On top of that, a little bragging in front of a beauty was a common problem for all men.

Jojo's face immediately revealed an expression of gratitude and she bit her lip as if she was very embarrassed and softly said, "Originally, I was not going to attend this banquet. This is because some time ago, I did something wrong and made my sister very angry. She wanted me to stay home to reflect on my mistakes for a few days..."

Milo hurriedly continued after that, "So you want me to plead for you? Understood... Tomorrow I will pay a visit to Her Majesty the

Empress!”

The moment he said that Rody was shocked.

Her Majesty the Empress?

That seductive woman is actually Her Majesty the Empress’ sister?

In fact, the only one at the banquet who did not know about Jojo’s background was Rody. Jojo’s sister was Her Majesty the Empress but her status was a bit weird.

According to convention, if the empress’ sister was married, the emperor would confer the title of ‘Lady’ to her. If she was not married, she would be given titles like ‘Princess’ or its equivalent instead.

Unfortunately for Jojo, even when her sister became Empress and the status of her family was upgraded, she was still not given any title. That was why the noble families in the Empire speculated that His Majesty the Emperor also drooled over Jojo’s beauty and was unwilling to give her the title of ‘Princess’. That way, at a later date it would be more convenient to bring her into the palace if His Majesty the Emperor wanted to.

In fact, Miss Jojo’s influence in the Empire was not weak. It was not only because she was the Empress’ sister but more-so because of her beauty as she was able to attract large crowds of ministers. In addition, she was daring enough to wear bold outfits and was a natural beauty. Inevitably, there were a lot of rumors circulated as a result of jealousy. As she was highly regarded among the Emperor’s circle of well-known nobles, nobody could really do anything to her. However, everyone would refer to her as a famous social escort for the nobles.

Those were things that Nicole knew but did not tell Rody. She really did not want Rody to provoke her. However, when she remembered what her brother was like and his reputation, Nicole

could not stop worrying. Although she knew Rody was an honest man and he would not provoke Jojo, she was afraid that Jojo would provoke Rody. That was why she seriously warned Rody on their way to the banquet.

Jojo looked at Milo and shook her head. “That’s not it. My sister will only be angry for two days but she will soon calm down. I do not want you to plead for me. I want to ask you for something else.”

Milo laughed loudly and heroically waved his hand. “Miss Jojo, just say it!”

Jojo’s face showed a shy expression and said, “Even though I received an invitation, I originally planned to stay at home tonight. But then I heard that the owner of this villa, Madame Sarah was someone who likes flowers. I also heard that she was growing a rare kind of flower, called the ‘Soul Taker’ in her courtyard. This flower is not exactly expensive but it is good for making perfumes. This sort of thing is regarded as a treasure to females. That is why I do not dare to ask Madame Sarah for it. Instead, I am asking you...”

Milo immediately asked back, “Is Miss Jojo asking me to help ask Madame Sarah for it?”

Jojo shook her head and blushed a bit. That made her even more charming to the extent that Milo’s eyeballs almost popped out. Jojo gently said, “I know Lord Milo is a senior warrior with extraordinary skill. At the moment, we are attending the banquet and there is no one in the garden...so...”

“Ah...” Milo’s face brightened as he smiled. “Miss, are you asking me to become a thief and pick that flower for you?”

Jojo seemed to feel ashamed and looked down. She then whispered, “Lord Milo is a renowned figure. You won’t just reject a woman’s request right?”

At that moment, Milo lost his soul. Even if he were asked to move a mountain, he would do it without blinking let alone steal a flower

Immediately, Milo adopted a confident look and said, “Don’t worry, Miss. I will go now and I will not disappoint you!”

Milo felt very proud. For Miss Jojo to make a private request from him would mean that she was interested in him. Also, to steal a flower for a beauty was something playboys did. The thought of winning the beauty's affection made Milo so happy that he almost shouted it out.

Jojo sighed. “Lord Milo, you must be careful. This flower has a purple body with red petals. Also, it only has 14 petals. You will definitely find the right one for me, yes...?”

Milo listened to the instructions carefully. After that, with his face showing deep affection, he bowed in the standard etiquette of a knight and then turned away with big steps.

Rody who was at the side was surprised. When he was studying about flowers during the past few days, he did not come across such a flower as mentioned by Jojo. He felt that something was strange. Perhaps, there was someone who knew more about flowers than that playboy?

After Milo had gone a substantial distance, Jojo immediately seemed like she was relieved.

The beautiful girl then turned and looked at Rody. Her mouth showed a trace of cunning smile and said, “Well then, finally managed to trick that disgusting fellow into leaving... Seth, you are so heartless. Why did you not visit me for so many days?”

Chapter 32: Jealous Nicole

After what Jojo said, Rody almost called her out!

Heartless?

Although Rody did not understand matters between men and women, based on the words he had heard, this was probably a bad situation, a very bad situation!

When Jojo noticed Rody's pale face and his silence, she began to look concerned. She also appeared anxious. In a low voice, she softly asked, "Seth, are you upset? Are you angry that I talked with Milo?" The woman seemed to plead. It seemed that this person valued Young Master Seth highly.

Rody also did not know whether to cry or to laugh. He hesitantly said, "That... Miss Jojo... I..."

Before Rody could finish his sentence, Jojo's powdery face immediately sank as she expressed her grievances. Her wonderful eyes seemed to be clouded with a layer of mist. She then bitterly asked, "Miss? Last time, when we watched the moon, you called me 'Honey'. Now that you have new girlfriends, I am called 'Miss'. You..."

Her words made Rody feel embarrassed. He was speechless and he felt a lump in his throat.

.

Those words made Rody's face turn red. He had no words to say. Even half of what she said already made him swallow.

In his mind, Rody cursed his bad luck. Even an idiot would realize the trouble he was in. This Miss Jojo was definitely that playboy's lover.

I am doomed... I am only an impostor. I can deceive others but how can I deceive his old lover just based on my appearance?

Didn't Miss Nicole say that there would not be anyone familiar with Seth in this party? How could such a thing happen?

Rody got restless, fidgeted and almost stamped his foot. The pretty girl in front of him was becoming more and more resentful. She looked like she was about to cry.

Although the surrounding nobles did not point or blame him, they had a knowing look in their eyes.

Some of them were beginning to have strange thoughts.

Young Master Seth was renowned as a lady-killer. It seems that his relationship with Miss Jojo was really unusual.

Just when Rody could no longer find a way to deal with the situation, his savior arrived.

Nicole had earlier left him together with some of her close friends so that Rody could learn how to mingle in the noble's circle in the banquet. She thought that there was nobody who was familiar with her brother here and nobody would know that he was an impostor. Naturally, she did not know that her playboy little brother was already in a relationship with one of the most famous beauties in the Imperial Capital.

Even then, she was still slightly worried. That was why she came out from behind to check up on Rody. However, the scene she saw made her angry.

Her 'brother' was standing there blushing and looking helpless. The panicky scene displeased Nicole. She had already explained to Rody what to do and did not expect that boy to be so useless. However, when she saw the woman beside him, her eyes immediately flared up.

Nicole even saw Jojo's bitter resentment. Her eyes were full of tears as she looked at the impostor with affection. His face, full of goodwill was clear even to the blind. Nicole immediately felt an ache in her heart.

That idiot, didn't I tell him not to provoke the seductress!!

You really can't tell a person by his looks! He looks honest but he is actually more flirtatious than my brother.

First, he indecently assaulted her! Then, he was captivated by the maid, Angel! Now, he was trying to court the seductress!

Subconsciously, Nicole had included herself in that relationship...

Nicole strode over, took a deep breath and then called out, "Little brother!"

Hearing Nicole's voice, Rody quickly turned around to see a displeased Nicole in front of him. He did not bother about Nicole's unhappy expression. In fact, he was very happy at that moment. To see Nicole's face right then was like seeing a goddess! A savior!

When she saw Rody look at her with a relieved expression, Nicole was stunned for a moment. She expected Rody to have a guilty look when she caught him having a good time. However, not only were there no traces of guilt on Rody's face, he, in fact, looked quite happy.

"Sister!" Rody took a deep breath and then deliberately spoke loudly, "Are you looking for me?" After he had finished, Rody winked at Nicole. As Jojo was now behind him, she did not see his contrivance.

Nicole was also a smart girl and immediately responded, "Yes, did you forget your night training already? We need to go home now!"

When Jojo saw Nicole, her love-struck expression was immediately concealed. She knew that Seth had always been afraid of his sister. That was why he told Jojo that their relationship must be kept secret from his sister. That was why Jojo also understood that in front of Nicole, she could not reveal even the slightest hint of their relationship. It would be undesirable if her

lover was also unhappy.

Rody quickly nodded and turned his head around. He pretended to sigh. “Miss Jojo, it seems that we have to end our conversation. I have matters I need to attend to and must leave now. I wish you a pleasant evening!”

The words Rody used were quite decent. There were also no problems with etiquette. It was all according to Nicole’s instructions.

Jojo’s eyes showed a hint of disappointment but then she stretched out her hand. A smile could be seen on her face as she gently said, “In that case, Young Master Seth, let us meet again some other day.”

Rody froze for a moment but soon remembered his manners. Like a gentleman, he took Jojo’s hand and got ready to kiss the back of her hand. He did not expect that the moment his lips kissed her hand, Miss Jojo would quickly turn over her hand. Her soft hand gently moved up from Rody’s lips and pinched his nose.

Nicole, who was behind her did not see this. Jojo’s hand then returned to her side while Rody blushed.

Nicole did not say anything and immediately headed for the door. All this while, she had not greeted Jojo at all.

Rody was ready to follow Nicole when Jojo came over and whispered into his ear, “My dear, no one will be at home tomorrow. Remember!”

Chapter 33: Tear Stained Face of a Beauty

“Why were you with that seductress?” The moment they were in the carriage, Nicole immediately scolded Rody.

Rody gave a wry smile. “I did not go and provoke her. She was the one that came looking for me!”

Nicole showed an expression of disbelief and sneered, “She looked for you? Jojo is famous in the Imperial Capital for her beauty. A lot of people were given looks of disdain by her. Even His Majesty the Emperor could not win her favor and you are saying she took the initiative to look for you?”

Rody became agitated and said, “She did not look for me! She was looking for your little brother! You are better off questioning your brother!”

“What?”

“Your brother seemed to have been acquainted with her for a while... And... Hmm!”

Nicole’s expression immediately changed as she pondered.

Seth and Jojo?

How is it that I have not heard of this before? The guards around Seth must have kept it a secret! Those two fellows actually dared to hide such an important matter from me! It seems that sending him back to the army was the right move!

After taking a deep breath, Nicole hatefully said, “You are not allowed to speak of this matter ever again! When we reach home, you will be punished... I will... I will... I still haven’t thought of a punishment!”

Rody curled his lips and said, “Yeah, go ahead and punish me! It’s not like you have never punished me before!”

Nicole stared at Rody.

Rody sighed and mumbled to himself, “Such a good and gentle looking girl. Why is she such a fierce person in private?”

“What did you say!” Nicole immediately heard him because she had sharp hearing.

Rody quickly shuts up and no longer uttered a single word. He quietly cursed along the way.

The two of them no longer spoke for the rest of the journey and were silent until they reached home.

Alighting from the carriage and without saying anything, Nicole led the way in. Without any orders from her, Rody just followed Nicole from behind. He subconsciously followed Nicole until they reached the small, quiet building.

That was a restricted area for the family so, none of their servants followed them. Nicole still did not say anything and continued to lead the way in. Rody hesitated for a moment and soon followed her.

Rody thought that the moment he walked through the door, Nicole would explode in anger. He did not expect that she would instead look for a chair to sit down.

“You, sit down as well,” Nicole said lightly. She was feeling downcast.

Nicole spoke the moment Rody sat down, “You must think that I am very harsh on you, correct?”

“Isn’t that the truth?” Rody said coldly. “Ever since I came here, I was constantly being manipulated by you! You gave me these ridiculous ears! You lied to me and made me fall seriously ill! You made me pose as your brother! Whatever you asked, I had to do!”

“But I also gave you an opportunity! Did you not think about this? As long as you complete my task, I will give you a good future! You are strong enough and I can arrange for you to join the army. With our family's influence, the moment you enter the

army, you will go very far. Is this not better than you remaining as a civilian warrior and living a vain life in the Imperial Capital? You may be strong but there are a lot of stronger people in the Imperial Capital. A great majority of them end up just drifting aimlessly every day. If you are fortunate, the nobles would hire you as their personal guard. If you are unlucky, they would hire you as a mercenary... Do you know that?" Nicole frowned.

"But I do not like the current situation!" Rody protested. "I know my status. I am a civilian! However, I am a person, not a tool! I want to be myself! I want to be Rody, not your brother! I do not want to be a noble! I dislike nobles!"

Rody did not notice that the moment he said 'I dislike nobles', Nicole was startled.

Rody continued, "When I was in the Academy, the people around me respected me. All of us were not nobles. However, they still respected me because I was stronger than them. I was more skillful with the sword than them. My studies were better compared to them. Although I was ugly, I did not feel inferior! However, I feel very uncomfortable here!"

Unexpectedly, Nicole did not get angry. She merely lowered her head and thought for a moment. She sighed and her eyebrows wrinkled. Her expression did not have the usual anger instead, it had a vulnerable look.

"I am a girl..." Nicole gently opened her mouth. "I am only two years older than you at most. With a family's status like mine at this age, I am supposed to be living a carefree life. Everyday, I would chat with my good friends, read books, learn about music, flowers or some other things. Every day should be filled with happiness. In fact, a few years ago when I was younger, I was indeed very happy..."

"But then, my father passed away. I, who was born into the Empire's Tulip Family was powerless. The family's glory must

never be destroyed, however, my little brother... he could not understand this. I was forced to put down my books and stop the zither music lessons that I loved. I could not even have a leisurely chat together with my friends. I had to bear with things that I did not like... and become the manager for the family. There are many things I worry about every day. My father's subordinates are all watching me. I know they are also helplessly watching the state of the Tulip Family. This family's prestige must not fall! I am like you! I do not like this as well! I also want to be 'Miss Nicole'! I do not want to be 'Manager Nicole' or 'Head of the Family Nicole'!"

As she talked, Nicole's eyes turned red. She had a grievous expression.

Rody felt something tugging at his heart. He suddenly remembered the scene he saw that night in the horse shed. Nicole had taken off the mask she wore on normal days. The girl in front of him now was like the girl whom he met that night, who cried as she held her father's horse. She was just a weak and helpless girl. She too could feel sadness, discomfort or cry. She also needed someone to support and comfort her or to dote on her.

Nicole sighed and slowly wiped away her tears. She then lightly said, "At times, I even thought of marrying myself off. Perhaps, if I could marry into a powerful family, the political marriage might be able to help me get external support for my family. But..."

The tears she just wiped away came out again. Nicole's voice sounded very weak, "But I really couldn't do it... I..."

Rody sighed. He stood up, walked to Nicole's side and gently said, "You shouldn't be bearing this burden. Where is your brother?"

"He... There were just times that I really hated him. He could not comprehend the amount of burden placed on the family. I promised my father that I would not let the banner of the Tulip Family fall.... but.... but I am just a girl..."

Finally, Nicole could no longer suppress her feelings and started

to cry. When Rody saw the sobbing girl, his heart gushed forth an indescribable tender feeling. He slowly stretched out his hand and gently stroked Nicole's hair, hoping to ease the sadness in her heart.

Nicole gently leaned against Rody's chest and cried even louder.

In this quiet environment, it seemed that the young girl finally found someone to rely on. All the grievances which she had buried within her for a long time finally broke loose.

Rody had a strange feeling with the warm, gentle and fragrant girl in his embrace. At first, he was just softly caressing Nicole's hair. However, he could no longer help but let his hand slip down her back.

He gently knelt down and both of his hands held Nicole's shoulders. He only realized that Nicole was wearing a strapless evening dress when he felt her warm and soft skin.

Nicole, being depressed, did not care about Rody's inappropriate actions. She merely felt safe in the arms of this person.

He looked at the pretty face in front of him, stained with tears. It was like raindrops on a pear blossom. It was especially charming and moving. Looking at her gentle lips up close, Rody could no longer control his feelings and slowly moved closer...

Chapter 34: Sinful Love

Their lips connected. Nicole's body froze for a moment. However, it gradually relaxed. Her eyes were tightly closed. Her body could not help but tremble lightly.

Rody also felt nervous. The restlessness in his heart made him exert more strength as he held Nicole tightly in his arms. His lips could feel the softness of her lips. He could also hear Nicole's breathing becoming heavier and he felt Nicole's heart beating faster.

Suddenly, Nicole pushed Rody away. She looked at Rody with a confused expression. Her eyes looked puzzled yet guilty.

Immediately, Nicole turned away and gently pushed Rody further away from her side.

Her face was still red and her eyes still teary. However, her expression was not entirely shy. Rather, it seemed to be some other kind of feeling.

"You... you are my little brother, ah..." Nicole said but did not elaborate more.

Rody could not help but grasp Nicole's shoulders again. His voice this time was not loud but his tone was firm, "I am not! I am Rody!"

Nicole relaxed a little but when she looked at Rody's face, her eyes revealed a complicated expression. "But... but your face... you..."

The man in front of her, that face, along with that inexplicable faint smiling expression, as well as his eyes and golden hair all belonged to her brother, Seth.

"Ugh..." Nicole groaned painfully and quickly covered her own eyes with her head looking down.

Nicole was now confused.

He... his face is Seth's... and I actually kissed him! Actually... Could it be that I... or...

For a moment, Nicole was filled with a variety of complex emotions. There was shame, guilt, anger and confusion. She was unable to gather her thoughts.

“No... Definitely not!” Nicole muttered. Her voice was almost too low to be heard but the tone was full of guilt.

Rody could not laugh or cry. He held up Nicole's face and forced her to look directly at him. He then slowly said, “I am not Seth. I am Rody!”

The tenderness in Nicole's eyes flashed by and then, she suddenly stood up. She looked down, not daring to look at Rody's face and spoke with a tone full of confusion, “I... I really cannot do it... I cannot be like this with you... You...”

Oh my God! No way... No way can I kiss someone that looks like Seth... These feelings of guilt... If someone sees me...”

Nicole whispered, “I am sorry.”

I am sorry?

Wasn't I the one who took the initiative to kiss her? If anyone was to apologize, shouldn't that person be me?

Rody had a strange feeling but when he saw Nicole leaving, Rody hurriedly blurted out, “Nicole! I... I really like you!”

The boy's first confession was very rigid. There was no cover nor were there sweet words. It was just a simple confession.

Nicole suddenly paused.

“I....” Rody's face was pale but his tone of voice was truthful. “That night, when I saw you looking weak in the horse shed, I already... I already fell in love with you! I speak the truth! I...”

"Don't say anymore... I beg you not to say anymore," Nicole said as she turned around. Her tone was weak as she slowly moved backward, looking at Rody with tenderness and confusion. She was undecided.

Finally, she retreated towards the door, opened it and left.

Rody slumped down onto the chair as if he was drained of energy. He looked at his shoes in a daze and was unable to say anything.

Could it be she doesn't like me? Possibly... What is her status? What is my status? However, based on her expression, this does not seem to be the case. Is it because of my current situation? Or is it because... because of this face?

Rody exerted all his strength trying to rub off his face in frustration.

Any man in his youth no matter how unconventional or audacious he was would need to gather his courage before he could confess to his first love. He was, after all, facing his first favorite of the opposite sex and expressing his true affections for her.

That night, Rody spoke what was his heart because he was agitated. However, the situation had unexpectedly turned. Originally, it seemed like happiness was just a step away. No, rather it was already in his embrace. Nonetheless, for an inexplicable reason, Nicole suddenly retreated with fear.

Rody did not know that the moment Nicole went out the door, she did not immediately leave. Instead, she leaned against the wall, feeling weak all over.

Why is this so?

The first man I have a good impression of... has to be him?

What is the reason?

Is it because he was the first person who was frivolous towards

me? Is it because he took my first kiss? Or is it because during the sparring match, that stubborn boy stood in the middle of the field and loudly said, “I did not lose!” in an oath-like tone?

But... why must it be him?

He is now my very own brother, ah!

His face is the same as Seth's! Kissing him is like kissing my own brother!

Nicole's heart was full of guilt.

Dragging her heavy legs, Nicole slowly left.

Rody was still filled with frustration when there was a knock on the door. Without waiting for Rody to react, the door opened. It would seem that the other party only knocked on the door out of courtesy.

Rody looked up to see the old groom, Mark, standing at the doorway. His eyes narrowed with a deep gaze as if he was sizing Rody up.

“You should not have done that!” The old man suddenly said.

Rody frowned.

What did he mean?

“What?”

“You should not have done that,” Mark repeated but then he said something else that frightened Rody, “Boy!”

Boy?

Why didn't he call me 'Young Master'?

Rody suddenly jumped up from his chair.

Old Mark did not panic and simply walked in. He walked till he was in front of Rody and suddenly slapped Rody in the face.

“Aargh!”

Immediately, a clear palm print was left on Rody's face.

Chapter 35: Soul Swap

Rody's face felt a burning pain. He looked at Old Mark with frightened eyes.

What just happened? He actually dared to hit me? On top of that, he succeeded?

When Old Mark lifted his hand earlier, Rody had already moved to the side subconsciously to avoid it. As a warrior with decent skills, no ordinary person would be able to hit him.

However, the slap somehow managed to land on his face. On top of that, Rody could barely catch the movement of his hand.

Rody, without realizing took a step back and knocked down the chair behind him.

“You...”

Mark showed an indifferent expression and calmly said, "I did not hit you because of what you just did to the Miss but because you should not have made her sad! You should not have reminded her of sad things! You should not have gotten angry at her! Boy, she has suffered enough!"

“What?” said Rody covered his face, looking dumbstruck.

“That’s enough! Stop making that stupid face boy!” Mark lightly continued, “I know your identity. You are not Young Master Seth! You are an Imperial Academy student, Rody!”

“Ah!” Rody took another step back but he tripped on the fallen chair. He stumbled a bit before regaining his balance.

“You fool!” Mark’s expression was now no longer respectful. His tone was cold. “Let me tell you! This entire matter was arranged by me! Otherwise, do you think a little boy like you could quietly sneak into the Tulip Family’s estate that night? Do you really think the guards here ate nothing but plain rice? If it were not for me,

you would have been caught the moment you climbed the walls!"

Rody was speechless. He was dumbstruck and just stared blankly at the mystifying old groom.

"Let me tell you, boy!" Mark bent down, picked up the chair and casually sat on it. He gave a deep smile and said, "First, some self-introduction. My name is... well, I have forgotten after so many years but you can call me Mark. As for my occupation.... Haha, I am a groom if it could be considered as an occupation. I am the fourth generation of Dandong's disciples."

"Dandong?" Rody really started to feel like he did not have an adequate amount of brain cells.

"Shut up and let me finish!" Old Mark became unhappy at Rody's interruption and continued, "How things developed had nothing to do with me. I merely pushed the situation this way by coincidence. That night, I noticed you hiding behind the tree from the start. Thinking that you were a coward, I ignored you. However, I soon found you tailing our carriage and then trying to sneak into our house. As a result, I could not ignore it. I wanted to know what kind of person was brave enough to attack the Tulip Family's house! That was why I rearranged the staff assignments and allowed you in. I wanted to see what you wanted to do."

"However, I was soon surprised when I found out all of you were just hired thugs who attacked the wrong carriage! I then lost interest in you. But then I saw you at the horse shed and decided to observe you again."

"Wait a minute!" Rody suddenly spoke. "You were there? You were there that night?"

Old Mark gave a supercilious expression. "Of course I was!"

"Why did you not attack me?"

"Attack you?" Old Mark showed a profound smile. "Attack you? Who do you think you are? You are not worthy of my attack but

you dared to do that thing to the Miss that night. At first, I could not stand it but then, the Young Master appeared... Quite frankly, I did not expect the child to have that kind of courage. To think he actually dared to leave... Ah, I'm speaking out of topic... Anyway, the Young Master knocked you out so I didn't need to do anything."

"Everything that happened after that was much simpler. After the Young Master left, his sister had to arrest you and use you as a substitute. I saw the entire thing but I am old and not bothered about it. Anyway, it is not my responsibility. Whatever the Miss wishes, so be it."

Rody was still speechless.

"Is it strange? I wonder if you know who I am?" Old Mark continued. "I told you. I am Master Dandong's disciple. We have been following the Tulip Family. My duty was to protect the safety of the Tulip Family's descendants."

"..."

Rody finally decided to ask, "Why did you not stop Seth that day?"

"Why do I need to stop him?" Old Mark asked. "Seth does not like to be a duke. It is his choice. Why should I stop him? Since he does not like it, it is better not to force him. Let him do the things he likes!"

"But..." Rody was dumbfounded. "Didn't you say you were protecting..."

"I just protect the person, not some stupid family glory. What does the Tulip Family's glory have to do with me? I see the Miss frowning unhappily every day." The old man suddenly became angry and said, "Hmph! What family glory? The earlier it is destroyed the better!" He immediately realized that he should not have said that. He then sighed and slowly said, "I will say it

straight. My duty is to protect their safety. If someone wants to hurt the Miss or Young Master, then I am duty bound to act. However, the family's responsibility is completely irrelevant to me. Understand?"

What duty? Dandong's disciple? Weren't Dandong and the Tulip Family quite close? Or could it be that he just refused to acknowledge the decline of the Tulip Family?

"I know you don't really understand. I don't really understand it either but... my duty is just that." Mark narrowed his eyes and said, "I have said so much already but basically, I don't care if you are an impostor. You do your thing and I will do my duty. However, I will not allow you to hurt the Miss. Do you understand? Sigh, if it weren't for you angering the Miss, I would be too lazy to be bothered by you."

Having said that, Mark stood up and was ready to leave but then Rody suddenly moved. He mustered the courage to shout loudly, "Wait!"

There were too many things he did not know. This person could be the only one who could help him answer all those puzzling questions he had. That was why he gathered his courage to ask.

"Mark, I really cannot understand. You said that you are Dandong's disciple but... Dandong has been dead for over two hundred years... you..."

"Oh..." Mark did not seem to mind answering. "Did you think that Dandong's disciples would die so easily? Let me tell you. As long as I am willing, I can live for a thousand years without any problems. I have been with the Tulip Family for generations. Have you ever heard of any of the Tulip Family's descendants being killed in action? Such as the Empire's Marshal, the invincible commander... An idiot like you would not have thought about it. Among the most famous officers in the world, how many of them survived the battlefield? Why is it that not a single successor of the

Tulip Family died on the battlefield?”

A horrifying yet puzzling thought crossed Rody’s mind. “You... How did you do that?”

“Haha... My first body has been dead for over two hundred years. I simply find someone of good health, kill him, and take his body. I think... I was the 9th Duke’s adjutant, the 11th Duke's servant, and the 12th Duke’s personal bodyguard.... Hmm. As for this body, when my previous body died a few decades ago, I found the body of this young servant.”

Rody’s mouth was hanging wide open and his eyes almost fell out.

Eternal life!!

This guy can actually possess people’s body to keep on living!

Dandong! It is Dandong again! How many miracles did he create??

First, he created life. Then he created space. Now, one of his disciples could preserve his soul for eternal life!

This is another one of God’s ability!

Chapter 36: Criticism

That night, Old Mark left Rody in a daze. Before leaving, he said, “I do not care about what you do. You can do it according to the Miss’ wishes. As for your relationship with the Miss, I also do not care. It is not part of my duty. However, there are two things you need to know. First, you cannot hurt the Miss! Second, you cannot tell anyone about me! If you violate either one of these conditions, I will personally kill you! I know you are a warrior but it would be easy for me to kill you!”

Rody spent his following days feeling disturbed.

In fact, since that day, Old Mark continued to play his role as an honest servant and gave him a respectful look whenever they met.

On the other hand, Nicole no longer met Rody as often as usual. When she did meet Rody, her eyes were evasive and she avoided contact with him. Rody started to become anxious like any love-struck youngster would.

Nicole hired many teachers who were responsible for teaching Rody all kinds of academic knowledge. However, her act of avoiding contact with Rody made it impossible for the two of them to get along.

The only good thing was that Nicole no longer got angry with Rody. Even if Rody did something that made Nicole dissatisfied, she would only silently look at Rody with a perplexed expression before sighing.

Rody also became more hardworking. This was because he felt distressed whenever Nicole did not punish him and instead, merely showed a sad and disappointed face. He even vowed to not let Nicole feel disappointed anymore.

Although the surrounding people felt strange that Nicole suddenly hired a lot of teachers, they also guessed that it was

because the prodigal son was back. Their other assumption was that because of the approaching major examination, the pressure from it would cause him to focus, reducing all other distractions.

Of course, there were also mishaps.

The teachers gave Rody incessant headaches leaving him terribly bored. He had to spend his entire time studying or training.

The swordsmanship instructor was a senior warrior but he was full of praises for Rody and even commented that the Tulip Family's descendants were deserving of their reputation.

However, the academic teachers made Rody feel awkward.

Reading a lot of the books from the Tulip Family's house, Rody's perspective was now different. When an academic question arose, Rody would frequently ask strange questions. His difficult questions often troubled the teachers. That was because Rody's questions and the popular, common academic theories were entirely different. Many of his viewpoints and different ways of understanding were too peculiar in the teachers' eyes. If it was not for the fact that the person saying it was the Tulip Family's Young Master, the grumpy old scholars who taught him would have cursed him for speaking nonsense.

They did not know that the one speaking 'nonsense' was not Rody but the playboy who had already run away. Rody merely looked at the playboy's notes and went to the teachers to confirm his doubts. This often made the teachers foam at their mouth.

Although the teachers often scolded Rody, Rody felt that the playboy's opinions were correct. However, he did not argue with the teachers because he did not want to make Nicole unhappy.

Gradually, Rody started to respect the playboy.

One day, when Rody was reading alone, Angel rushed into the room with a panic-stricken face.

"What happened?" Rody put the book down and gave a faint

smile.

Rody had recently become more accustomed to his identity as the Young Master. He was now able to keep calm in unexpected situations. Although it was surprising to others, they felt that the Young Master had finally matured and became more stable.

After what he saw and experienced the past few days, there were not many things that could surprise him now. After all, he had already seen a cursing skeleton and a monster who was a few hundred years old. What else could surprise him now?

“Young Master Seth! This is terrible! Miss Nicole is coming here! She looks really angry! You... You better hide quickly!”

Rody froze for a moment. He immediately knew the young girl's intention.

He understood the young girl's feelings for him... or rather, her feelings for the real Young Master Seth. He also knew that no matter what happens, the young girl would stay by his side. When Rody did something wrong, she would always try to cover up his mistakes and keep it a secret from Nicole. That being said, Nicole had not been punishing him for his mistakes lately.

“What happened?”

Angel hesitated for a moment before speaking, “Today, a beautiful woman came to the house. When she arrived, she did not seem to be happy. She said she was looking for you. However, Miss Nicole met her first. After a long talk, Miss Nicole became angry and she is now coming over here!”

“Woman? What woman?”

Angel showed a long face and softly said, “I do not know... but... she is very beautiful... very beautiful...”

Yes, perhaps she became jealous when she heard of a beautiful woman looking for me. Then she secretly looked for her to see what happened. After that, she found out about Nicole coming

here.

Rody smiled and said, "Alright, I understand. You should hide first. I will speak with Nicole." He looked at the young girl to see her worried look and then he reassured her, "Don't worry, nothing bad will happen to me."

Angel felt puzzled.

How could this be? In the past, when Miss Nicole came to ask about the problems the Young Master had caused, the Young Master would become frightened and immediately flee. If he did not have time to escape, I would usually help him climb out the window... but now... why does he look so calm and confident?

Then again, the Young Master has changed a lot recently.

Angel hesitated for a moment before leaving.

Rody watched Angel walk out the door before he made a wry smile.

A beautiful woman most likely came here to settle some kind of debt but the person she is looking for is not me. Seth, you really left behind a lot of problems for me.

Chapter 37: Abstain from Women

The moment Nicole entered Rody's room, she started to regret it.

That night, the woman made an appointment with Rody. Rody missed it and therefore she came looking for Rody. For some reason, when the seductress came looking for her brother, Nicole immediately became furious. Although she held her temper and talked to the seductress for a long time, she became angrier the more she heard. Finally, she heard that the seductress and Rody had arranged a meeting. However, Rody missed the appointment so, she decided to look for Rody. In the end, Nicole was unable to contain her anger and wanted to get even with Rody.

But why am I angry?

Even if it is that woman... it is my brother's fault. It has nothing to do with Rody... so why am I getting angry?

Is it because it is Rody?

Or is it because, that night, Rody actually contacted her and made an appointment.... That bastard really had the audacity to make an appointment with that seductress!

Nicole who was unable to contain her anger immediately rushed to find fault with Rody. However, the moment she entered the room, she saw Rody calmly looking at her. His calm blue eyes were as if he could see through her.

Nicole's anger immediately flew away and her heart felt weak. She had come to vent her anger towards Rody but now she just stood there and was unable to make eye contact.

"You are finally willing to see me, Nicole." Rody tried to suppress his excited feelings and slowly walked forward.

He then suddenly grabbed Nicole's hand. Nicole trembled as though she was suddenly struck by lightning. She wanted to move back but Rody held her hand tightly.

“Let me go...” Her voice did not sound like she was struggling. Rather, it would be better to say that it sounded more like pleading.

Rody's face also turned red. Although they had close contact before, the first time was when Nicole was unconscious due to Rody's philandering and the second time was when both of them were emotionally agitated. Rody felt a strange kind of feeling when he caught hold of Nicole's hand: it felt like they were lovers.

Fortunately, Rody barely used his strength and soon eased his grip. Nicole quickly took a step back in fear of Rody's next move.

“Why did you come to find me so suddenly? Did something happen?”

“Uh?” Nicole was stunned for a moment. She then remembered the reason she looked for him. She resented her own failure to control herself and also her inability to understand her own timidity and anger. Without the courage to look at Rody's face she whispered, “That Jojo... She came.”

Rody's hands immediately started to sweat. He had personally experienced the bewitching powers of Jojo. To a boy like him, Nicole and Angel had a young charm but Jojo was like a witch. On top of that, she was also the playboy's old lover. She would probably see through his disguise in no time.

“What should we do? Why did she come here? Could it be she has already learned of my identity?” Rody rubbed his hands and gave a wry smile.

When she spoke of Jojo, Nicole's bashful feelings all but disappeared. She stared at Rody coldly and said, “Why? Of course, it is for you! I did not know that you two already arranged a meeting that night. Is it true?”

Rody shook his head and looked disgruntled when he suddenly remembered the words Jojo said to him just before he left that day,

‘There will be no one at my house tomorrow night.’ The moment he understood the meaning of that sentence along with Jojo’s seductive appearance, Rody’s face turned red.

After Nicole carefully finished listening to what Rody had to say, her complexion became heavier. She tilted her head to one side as if she was pondering deeply and seemed preoccupied with her thoughts.

Rody thought that Nicole suspected he was in a relationship with Jojo and immediately waved his hands. “Nicole, do not think too much. I... I have nothing to do with her.”

Nicole gave a strange smile and lightly said, “Of course, it has nothing to do with you. Who is Jojo? The person she likes is a playboy like Seth. She won’t even look at a fool like you.”

Rody sighed and mumbled, “Yes, I am a fool. In your heart, I am just an insignificant fool.” That implication made him quite depressed.

Seeing Rody unhappy, Nicole’s heart softened. She spoke in a small voice, “That’s...not it... You are not... not a big fool.” As she said this, Nicole suddenly burst into laughter. Her laughter was like a blooming flower. Rody looked straight at Nicole’s eyes feeling quite silly. He had never seen Nicole laugh like this before.

Suddenly noticing Rody’s gaze, Nicole became bashful again as she stomped her feet angrily. “You!” Nicole only managed to shout out a single word when she noticed Rody’s infatuated eyes. She was then unable to speak anymore.

They gazed into each others’ eyes and fell into a delicate mood when they abruptly heard the sound of people talking outside the door.

They could only hear the sound of arguing outside. Then with a loud cry, the door was pushed open and a fiery red figure rushed in.

The two were immediately frightened and separated. Nicole was so afraid that she moved back towards the wall.

The person who arrived was the gorgeous woman, Jojo.

After that night, Jojo waited for Rody the following day and was very angry when Rody did not appear. She had high standards and thought that all the nobles in the Empire were useless. Some nobles indulged in exaggeration while others were militaristic and boorish. The rest were worthless people infatuated with her beauty. But then, she got acquainted with Seth. Seth admired her so much. Jojo, herself, was amazed at Seth's endless amount of knowledge. Seth was a master of love and knew how to capture a girl's heart. Together with his good looks, he managed to win Jojo's heart.

To be able to make even Jojo grieve was a testimony of Seth's skills as a playboy. He fooled around with so many women and would become indifferent after some time. Although Jojo was angry, Seth did not show his face. She also felt troubled. She did not expect to meet her lover at the banquet only for him to run away after only saying a few words. Seth was also missing on the night of the meeting. Jojo was an arrogant and proud person. After feeling dejected for so many days, she finally decided to go to their house.

After meeting and talking with Nicole for a while, Nicole suddenly became angry and left to find Seth. Jojo continued to sit down for a while but she was also impatient and soon rushed in as well. The Tulip Family may have servants and guards but they also knew of Jojo's status. Even those who did not would not dare to block her when they saw her noble clothing. The ones who did block her did not put in much effort. Just like that, Jojo made her way to Rody's bedroom.

Rody saw Jojo standing in front of him and felt nervous. He could see Jojo wearing red fur clothing. The elegant garment highlighted her arrogant figure. Unfortunately, her charming face

was not as charming as usual. It looked as if she did not eat well the past few days. She was sad and stared at Rody with resentful eyes.

“Seth! Why did you ignore me for so many days!” Jojo stood in front of Rody for a while before she slowly spoke. Her voice was filled with sorrow. Her soft voice sounded delicate and charming.

Rody started to sweat on his forehead. He did not know how to answer and looked at Nicole. Nicole had a strange expression and avoided eye contact with Rody.

Rody sighed and could only answer, “I...”

When Jojo noticed Rody’s cold attitude, her heart became more distressed. She gritted her teeth and said, “I have already told your sister about our relationship. How do you intend to reply me?”

Rody’s heart felt more tensed. He once again glanced at Nicole to find her looking impassive and avoiding eye contact.

“I...I am busy these days...” Rody hesitated for a while. He had forced himself to utter that sentence.

“What are you busy with?” Jojo spoke resentfully. In the Imperial Capital, there were countless nobles infatuated by her beauty yet, she refused to look at any of them. Still, the fellow in front of her was so indifferent towards her!!

Rody felt like it was becoming harder to speak. “You know... I, I... in a few days, I will need to take His Majesty’s examination to inherit the family’s title. So for the past few days, I have been learning from a few teachers.”

Jojo’s expression grew gentler. Although she could not see Seth, she paid attention to every action. She had heard about the Tulip Family hiring many instructors and teachers to teach the young master. Rody’s story sounded reasonable.

“Then, why did you not visit me that night?” When Jojo said this, she could not help but glance at Nicole with a red face.

Rody braced himself and said, “I...” He glanced at Nicole again but it seemed that Nicole was determined to not give him any suggestions.

“What...?” Jojo’s mouth fell, her eyes were filled with tears.

“I was practicing martial arts!” Rody impulsively blurted out. The moment he said this, he found an excuse and lied smoothly, “My instructor told me that my foundation was terrible. Before the examination, I need to work hard and if possible, not become... intimate... with women...”

The moment he said this, Jojo blushed. Nicole suddenly coughed. She also did not expect Rody to suddenly give such an impressive excuse.

Chapter 38: Female Might

Jojo may have loved Seth but she also hated him. Nevertheless, Jojo was not a recklessly possessive person. Although she did not believe Rody's words, it would not be appropriate for her to continue to speak. After all, even if she loved Seth, she knew that her beloved would need to be responsible for the family and she also wanted her beloved to have a good future.

Being mindful, Jojo let out a light 'hmp'. Although she was still angry, her expression became much gentler. She did not care that Nicole was still around and boldly pulled Rody's hand. "You see, your hand is already so big! Was swordplay really so difficult? I still want to listen to you play the zither!"

Rody thought to himself.

Play the zither? I can't even sing and I am completely tone deaf. If I tried to play the zither, I would definitely get caught. I must definitely not play the zither.

Jojo felt sorry for him and her heart became soft. She then said, "Today, I risked everything to come and find you! You can no longer deceive me! I will not pursue the matter of you treating me coldly the past few days but you must accompany me tomorrow!"

Rody was about to refuse but stopped when he saw Jojo's glare. He was thinking of promising her first and then going into hiding. Since the Tulip Family's house was so big, it may be difficult for her to search for him.

The moment Rody tried to speak, Nicole spoke out coldly, "He cannot go tomorrow."

"Why?" Jojo frowned.

"Tomorrow, he is going to practice his swordsmanship!"

"What about the day after tomorrow?"

“No can do.”

“The following day?”

Nicole looked at her coldly, “No.”

“Why are you so strict with him?” Jojo glared. “Why are you preventing him from being with me?”

Nicole did not lose her temper but coldly replied, “No particular reason. Until he has passed the assessment, I will not let him be distracted.”

Jojo became very angry and almost turned hostile. Her elder sister was the Empress and a noble. She was always pampered in the Imperial Capital. How could she control her temper? To add, it was natural for a maiden in love to feel extreme hatred towards the people who prevented her and her beloved from being together.

However, she knew that Nicole was Seth’s sister. It would not be good if she turned hostile. She furiously stomped her foot and glared at Nicole. After that, she suddenly leaned and kissed Rody before glancing at Nicole once again.

Before Rody could react, he felt her lips on his cheek.

While Rody was still in a daze, Jojo looked at him with a flushed face and whispered, “I will secretly come to find you.”

The seductress then turned and ran away. The look on Nicole’s face could be compared to turbulent winds which forebode a coming storm. After a long time, Nicole finally glared fiercely at Rody. She then walked out without uttering a single word.

The drama was finally over. Although Rody was determined to stop Nicole as he had a lot of things to talk about, he was unable to do so. He just held his cheek which Jojo kissed in a daze.

The next day, Nicole changed her attitude towards Rody again. She became even sterner compared to previous days when she did not hit or scold him. Overnight, she changed from a gentle sister to

a devil-like instructor.

Rody's swordsmanship instructor was also replaced.

Now, Rody's swordsmanship instructor was the bearded Instructor Carter. Rody was trained every day by him until he felt miserable. As Carter was an officer in the army, he trained Rody using his own method which he used to train elites of the army. Although Rody had a strong constitution, after becoming the Young Master for so many days, he had gotten too comfortable. As a result, he became lazy. Instructor Carter did not speak much but made him carry a 30kg sword and wear 20kg of armor. He then needed to run around the field for 70 or 80 laps. It was enough to make him tired to the point of collapsing. However, Carter did not have mercy on him and would whip him if he slowed down. After several days, Rody lost count of a number of whippings he received.

Every day, Nicole would observe him but she was not distressed by his torturous training. Instead, she would support Carter. Sometimes, Rody could not help but think that this was a jealous woman's form of vengeance.

Shit! Jojo only kissed me once! If you want to be jealous then just kiss me as well!

Naturally, these weren't words that Rody was brave enough to utter.

Fortunately, Instructor Carter's swordsmanship was good. After running every day, Carter would teach Rody some swordsmanship and also pass on some advice on what to do when encountering an enemy. This was because Rody's strength at that moment was already not much weaker compared to Carter's. However, Rody's did not have much experience fighting an enemy. Rody barely had the chance to fight.

Those few days, Rody felt so tired that he fell asleep the moment he touched the pillow every night. He would even drool while he

was asleep. Angel, who woke him up every morning, had to call him for a long time. Angel's felt distressed. Without a doubt, within those few days, Rody's body became more muscular because of his strenuous training.

On the other hand, the academic teachers no longer had anything to teach Rody. In fact, the scholars received a headache the moment they saw Rody. In their eyes, their student was someone who rebelled against the typical way. He often said outrageous things the moment he opened his mouth. If he was not from an influential family but from a commoner's family, he would have already been hanged.

An example was when a teacher once talked about the relationship between theology and the emperor's power of monarchy. According to the tradition of the Empire, the emperor's power needed to be recognized by the pope. Otherwise, the emperor's position would not be justified. In other words, the pope's status and dignity were higher than that of the emperor's. In the entire continent, they all believed in the Almighty God. The ones that did not believe in God were all considered pagans. The more serious cases would result in hanging.

The teacher then spoke about the church's armed forces, the Flame Knights. The pope also had his own territory. Although these armed forces normally belonged to the Empire, these soldiers could not be mobilized by anyone other than the church. This included the emperor himself! The church got a share of the taxes collected by the Empire. The church even collected atonement tax directly from each subject. The Empire could not intervene in this matter.

For most scholars, these were very normal and natural things. However, Rody could not help but express his views.

Rody believed that this was weakening the monarchy's power by weakening the governing rights and authority of the Empire. For a long time, the hearts of the Empire's subjects subconsciously

yielded to this concept that the church's authority was stronger than the governing power of the Empire! The church had their own taxes and armed forces. This already represented a kind of power division within the Empire. The strength of an empire depended on a strong central power base. It would be extremely dangerous if it was not clear as to who had the highest authority. If the church and the emperor clashed, would the subjects support the church or the emperor?

The moment these words came out, the scholars immediately turned pale. They covered their mouths and stared at Rody with a terrified expression.

Since then, Rody stopped asking the teachers questions. The teachers just taught from the books and did not dare to say anything else.

Other than learning swordsmanship and whatever the scholars taught him, Rody also hid in his room to read. However, the more he read, the more questions arose. The ideas appearing in his mind also became more frightening.

He occasionally thought of asking the skeleton, Andy and the old groom, Mark. He believed that since they were the creation and disciple of the Great Sage Dandong, they would have a lot of wisdom and would be able to answer his questions. However, the skeleton, Andy never got in touch with him. Although Rody had the mask, he did not know how to use the mask to open the space to find the skeleton. Besides, every time he went into the small building, Andy continued to stay a lifeless and voiceless skeleton.

As for Old Mark, he no longer met with Rody alone while he acted like a servant outside.

Many days later, the colossal Randt's injuries recovered and he was officially sent to Rody's side to act as a personal bodyguard. Randt was also given another important task by Nicole.

The task was to teach Rody how to ride a horse.

Chapter 39: Youth's Aspiration

Rody, in high spirits, rode on the pure white horse. After a few laps, he pulled the reins to stop in front of Randt. He stood up and jumped down from the horse. His movements were nimble and steady and he looked proud of himself.

“How was it, Randt? Was my riding good?”

Rody was very excited. The common people in the Empire did not have much chance to ride a horse. The yearly expenses to feed a horse was about that of the yearly food and clothing expenses of an adult. The yearly expenditure of a good horse would be enough to support an entire common family for a year.

Rody also had some horse riding training in the Imperial Academy. A man at heart, he naturally liked the feeling of riding a horse. Unfortunately, the number of horse riding classes in the academy were unable to satisfy him. Now that he had a chance to ride a horse again, he obviously felt happy.

After some lessons from the instructors of the Imperial Academy, he could ride properly. Together with his natural skills and some trials, he was now quite proficient.

Randt calmly looked at the triumphant young master and flatly said, “It’s passable.”

Although Randt did not say much, his expression showed disapproval. Rody saw this and asked, “Only passable? Randt, I have practiced for a long time.”

Randt then raised his head and said in a muffled voice, “Young Master, I have something to say.”

“What is it?”

Randt’s expression was respectful even when his voice was stern, “You are the heir to the Tulip Family. In the future, you may be selected as a marshal. You will become a duke and lead the army to

fight all across the country. I will tell you the truth. The way you are riding right now is enough for strolling in the Imperial Capital. However, if you were marching to fight in a war, you would not last three days.”

“Oh?” Rody’s face did not show any signs of unhappiness. On the contrary, it was full of excitement.

Randt nodded and got onto his black horse and completed the first lap normally. However, he suddenly accelerated during the second lap. He leaned forward while holding a spear and he readied his posture for an assault.

“This posture is the standard charging posture of the Empire’s cavalry,” Randt said the moment he finished his lap and stopped in front of Rody. “Young Master, do not look down on horsemanship. There are times that the correct posture would save your life. For example, the charging posture would not only maintain the momentum of the charge but would also help to avoid enemy arrows. These are the experience of centuries of the Empire’s cavalry.”

“On top of that, fighting on a horse and fighting on foot is completely different. I know your swordsmanship is formidable but would you be able to stay as quick and nimble on a horse? If you want to avoid attacks on a horse, you would need to rely on your horse and you would need to know how to control your horse to ensure your combat effectiveness. Moreover, fighting on a horse would require waist power. No amount of trickery can compensate for that.”

After listening to that, Rody’s expression became serious and he was lost in thought.

As the Young Master, even though a fake one, he had the privilege to learn such excellent horsemanship. It was something he could only dream of. Moreover, Nicole had promised to send him to the army in the future. The horse riding skill would be

indispensable for an officer.

Soon afterward, Rody immediately put away his pride and learned how to ride a horse according to Randt's instructions.

Each day, Rody would fall down many times from his horse. Although he was strong, his body was unable to withstand it. He did not know how many injuries he had from falling down. Fortunately, Rody was stubborn. The more he fell, the fewer complaints he made. He merely gritted his teeth before mounting the horse and trying again.

After a few days, his foundation improved and Rody gradually became more familiar with manipulating the horse.

Randt was amazed at Rody's quick progress. He started teaching Rody about common cavalry strategies used by the Empire's cavalry. In less than half a month, Randt had nothing left to teach Rody. He could only accompany Rody and let him practice.

Although Rody received a lot of bruises, he was still excited about practicing.

One night, Rody returned to his room covered in sweat. He called out to Angel and received her gentle service and a change of clothes. He then took off the padding for his ears. The ear pads were very uncomfortable especially when he was covered in dust and sweat every day.

Just as soon as Rody changed his clothes, Nicole quietly entered the room and waved. It was a signal for Angel to leave.

Nicole said quietly, "Sit down first. I have something to say."

Rody sighed. These days, he felt like he and Nicole were drifting apart. Sometimes, he thought that Nicole was still angry. It was most likely a punishment for all his wrongdoings. At this moment, his heart was filled with both hate and love for Nicole. After so many days, his feelings were mostly that of anger.

He was a young man who was full of vitality. His strength was

also improving. It inevitably started a form of youthful arrogance in him. This gave birth to a feeling of anger towards Nicole. Although he wholeheartedly loved Nicole, the treatment he received from her made him extremely depressed.

“Now you really have an aristocratic appearance. It seems that you also learned quickly these past days.”

Rody faintly said, “What’s the point of looking like an aristocrat? I myself know that I am just a civilian.”

Nicole nodded. She pretended to not hear the bitterness in Rody’s words and bowed her head nearer to his as she said softly, “For the next few days, I want to teach you a few things. After.... After that, you will need to go to the academy.”

Rody asked, “Have you found your brother yet?”

Nicole’s face changed slightly and she whispered, “I don’t want to hide the truth from you. I sent someone to the sea to chase his boat but...”

Rody sighed and gently said, “I really hope you can find Seth and bring him back.”

Nicole sighed. "No. Even if I dragged Seth back, you will still need to pretend to be Seth. That is until you pass the examination and inherit the title."

“Why?”

“Do you still not understand?" Nicole's eyes had a puzzled look. "Rody, you are very smart. I heard from your teachers that you learned quickly and that you were really outstanding. Seth was definitely not as good as this. He... if he is the one who sits for the examination, he will definitely not be able to inherit the title. That is why... even if I find him, you will still need to complete your task."

Rody was silent for a moment before whispering, “I understand.” He then looked up to Nicole’s face and asked, “So, what are you

going to teach me today?”

Nicole’s face was deep in thought and then she asked, “Do you know who, within the Empire, doesn’t want to see the Tulip Family inherit the title the most?”

“Who?”

Chapter 40: Innate Rebellious Spirit

“For hundreds of years, the Tulip Family was known as the Empire’s ‘God of War’ Family. All the successors of our family were undefeated commanders on the battlefield! Until today, it can be said that the Tulip Family’s flame and the Tulip Family’s banner are the army’s god! Just the Tulip Family’s banner would be enough to raise the soldiers’ morale! It is wonderful and glorious!”

“However, behind all this glory, there are many people who hate it. The monarchy would not tolerate being challenged! Would the Emperor tolerate the prestige of a military power? Would he tolerate someone in the army having more authority than him? An invincible commander would definitely be the pillar of the Empire. However, the god of an army would make the Emperor restless. If something bad happens... would the army follow the Tulip Family’s banner or the Emperor’s banner?”

“Talking about standings in the Empire, the original Tulip Family was unparalleled. My father was the Imperial Army’s marshal. He was also the duke of the entire Xilin province. There was no other family who was as impressive as that. However, such a situation only made His Majesty disturbed. The Tulip Family’s meritorious service also made His Majesty feel embarrassed. For a family of such status to continue to have high meritorious service, what would His Majesty reward us with? Fiefdom? This family already owned an entire province in the Empire! Titles? This family already had dukes! Wealth? The taxes from Xilin were already a tremendous amount so...”

Nicole’s tone gradually lowered. Rody was also starting to be frightened.

He was merely a commoner, unknown to the public. Though he had learned some history of the Empire, he had never heard of the power struggles of the upper-class people before.

Nicole sighed and continued.

“So, when my father died, His Majesty thought this was an opportunity to take back the long-standing military power of the Tulip Family. Coincidentally, my brother was not yet an adult and could inherit the title. At the same time, it seemed that the Lionheart Family was becoming more glorious. His Majesty also seemed to be fond of the Military Minister. It was to the extent that even though the Military Minister's nephew, Milo just became an adult, he was already given military leadership of a region. Do you know, when my father was alive the Lionheart family needed to consider the Tulip Family opinion before taking any action? Their current glory only came about in recent years. His Majesty is intentionally patronizing them to restrict us.”

“That is why, in the Empire, the one person that is most reluctant to see the Tulip Family rise again is His Majesty the Emperor! He definitely does not want to see the army support another banner! In the heart of every emperor within the Empire, the imperial authority is supreme!”

These words made Rody's mouth dry and his heart confused. After a while, he asked, "But... this is not the Tulip Family's fault. Is it wrong to have outstanding meritorious service?"

Nicole quietly replied, “This is not our fault. It is also not His Majesty the Emperor's fault. The only thing that is wrong is that the Tulip Family has overshadowed His Majesty's brilliance!”

Rody thought to himself and sighed. “Yes, this is not the Tulip Family's fault and it is also not His Majesty's fault. So in the end, whose fault is it?”

Nicole shook her head weakly. “I do not know. No matter how I think about it, I could not find the answer. I often have sleepless nights trying to think of an answer. I know that the family must be revived but I do not know how. Right now, I do not even know what to do.”

Nicole's tone was extremely weak. She was just a girl who had to carry the heavy burden of the family. How could she find the solution to such a complicated problem? Even if she found the solution, how would she go about solving it?

All sorts of ideas flashed through Rody's mind. In the end, he found something that scared even himself.

"The Tulip Family's glory was established during the founding of the Empire! If the emperor of the Empire also became the enemy of the Tulip Family then... the Tulip Family will perish!"

Rody was agitated and could not help but say what was on his mind.

Unexpectedly, there was not much change in Nicole's expression. However, her beautiful eyes exposed a peculiar gaze and she spoke in a strange tone, "Do you know, someone said that before."

"Who?"

"Master Dandong! Two hundred years ago, before his death."

"What?" Rody suddenly jumped feeling alarmed.

Honestly, Rody now feared old Dandong. It was as if all the things related to this old guy had to be universally shocking!

Rody suddenly remembered Old Mark and his duty. It was to protect the descendants of the Tulip Family and not to help the Tulip Family's cause.

Could it be that the Dandong Family anticipated the decline of the Tulip Family? Was that why he left this job to his disciples? That was how he could protect the family's descendants but he ignored the decline of the family status!

No wonder that day Old Mark was not bothered by Seth running away. What did he say again?

"I protect the descendants. Not some stupid family glory. What does the Tulip Family's glory have to do with me? I see the Miss

frowning unhappily every day. Hmph! What about the family glory? The earlier it is destroyed the better!”

The earlier it is destroyed the better?

Rody suddenly had a strange thought. Perhaps Old Mark was also tired of being a bodyguard for centuries? When the family is destroyed, he will just need to ensure the descendants' safety and then he will be free.

Seeing Rody's face change slightly, Nicole frowned. “What are you thinking of?”

Rody's mind was constantly churning and he suddenly blurted out, “Have you not thought about it... I saw this phrase these few days.... ‘The losers are always in the wrong!’ Don't tell me your family has never thought of...”

“Shut up!” Nicole looked frightened and quickly shouted. Then she lowered her voice, “Fool! Don't say such nonsense!”

“Why can't I speak freely? The Emperor... hmm... Was he always the Emperor? Hundreds of years ago, before the Empire existed, not only was there no Tulip Family... Did emperors even exist?”

Nicole was stunned for a moment. She felt that Rody's words were wrong but she could not tell where he was wrong.

Rody bravely said, "I am not someone from the Tulip Family! I am just a civilian! However, I have never felt that His Majesty the Emperor was sacred! Is he someone who deserves my respect? In the Empire, the common people cannot even afford a horse! Most of a commoner's hard earned money are given to the nobles! Common citizens cannot enter the academy and only the nobles can sit in carriages! People without ability can live extravagant lives while people with abilities work so hard yet they cannot afford to have rice! A heroic Grade 5 swordsman must become a bodyguard of a fat and useless man! If the rules of this world are set by the Emperor, why must I respect him? I am just a common

civilian. If the Emperor does not love us, why must we love him?"

"Ah!" Nicole exclaimed and covered her mouth. She was surprised to see the agitated Rody. It felt like the usual honest and hardworking Rody had suddenly changed to a different person.

"Do you think what I said was wrong?" Rody's agitation stopped and he knitted his eyebrows. After a while, he sighed. "Do you know, these were not ideas I thought of... these ideas were from your brother's notes. I have been here for so many days. Every day I read and think. Now I feel that most of your brother's way of thinking was right."

"You... How can you say that? You..." Nicole pointed at Rody with her fingers trembling. She did not know how to continue.

This time, Rody did not panic. He looked calm. Then, he bent down, saluted and lightly said, "Nicole, I am a nobody. A mere civilian. I can only voice out such matters. Hmph, what else can a nobody do?"

His tone was self-deprecating and self-mocking. Nicole felt that she saw a side of Rody she never knew about.

Chapter 41: The Fake Playboy

Nicole was really frightened of Rody's shocking opinions. She severely warned him not to say such things in front of others. Rody did not defend himself and merely promised her that. Nicole was still concerned and continued to say more but Rody patiently explained himself. "Nicole, I already said I am an insignificant person. These ideas, even if I think about it, I would not tell anyone other than you. Isn't the bitterness I experienced the past few days not enough? I voice some of my opinions aloud and the teachers already treated me as a deviant. Think carefully, have you not been punishing me a lot lately? I have already learned not to speak so much."

Nicole was immediately speechless and her face turned red. The past few days, although she did punish Rody, most of it was not because of Rody's opinions but because of her jealousy. Especially when Jojo kissed Rody, Nicole could not sleep out of anger.

With a red face, Nicole changed the topic and talked about Seth's usual habits. This is because Rody would need to pretend to be Seth when he returns to the Academy. Nicole introduced the people acquainted with Seth during his time in the Academy to Rody. She also explained their family backgrounds and Seth's relationship with them. Nicole expended all her efforts on her little brother. Seth's bodyguard was originally arranged by Nicole. However, the bodyguard was later bought over by Seth. Even then, Nicole's understanding of Seth's habit should be mostly correct.

The more Rody listened, the heavier his head felt. He not only needed to remember a lot of people that he did not recognize, he also needed to recognize their appearance, their speech styles, and their preferences. This was more tiresome than the monstrous training by Instructor Carter. Even if Rody had extraordinary perseverance, he was still unable to understand these concepts that he has no knowledge in. To Rody, a stranger is just a name and to

expect him to remember various information of strangers and then needed to pretend like he knew them for a long time, gave him a headache.

On top of that, it was more than one person...

Nicole gave Rody a register containing all sorts of information. For three full days, she stopped all of Rody's other classes. Rody only needed to concentrate on remembering the information on the register in his room. Instructor Carter had no objection to this. In his opinion, the Young Master's progress can only be described as 'abnormal'. Carter could not understand why the Young Master, who was initially so weak that any of his disciples could easily defeat, suddenly became so strong that even his strongest disciple was severely injured instead.

Instructor Carter's report to Nicole was: If the Young Master were to take the assessment right now, he could easily pass the third-grade warrior assessment. Fourth-grade warrior assessment would not be too much of a problem.... If he could do it like the time he fought Randt and used that sword, it is possible for him to pass the fifth-grade warrior assessment too.

The other scholars and teachers felt happy. Although the Young Master was smart, he has too many preposterous ideas. If they had to deal with him every day, they would go crazy and start frothing at the mouth. Might as well stay at home peacefully....

Just like that, three quiet and boring days passed by quickly. Rody's head was now filled with all kinds of information on various people. Early in the morning, Nicole asked Angel to help him dress up and Rody was soon wearing the standard noble's uniform of the Imperial Academy.

The only surprise to Rody was that there was a star embroidered onto Seth's original uniform!

It represents the identity of a warrior!

Of course, Rody would not believe that the real Young Master possesses the strength of a first-grade warrior. He believes that the Tulip family's influence must have been used to pass the first-grade examination.

Feeling nervous, Rody followed Nicole onto the carriage.

The magnificent luxury carriage was surrounded by guards riding on horses. Old Mark was also leisurely holding his whip. Rody felt like he was going towards the execution grounds.

In the carriage, Rody wanted to ask Nicole a question, something that he has been wanting to do for several days now.

His question was about his recommended actions if he were to encounter another one of Seth's lovers. This is because the information Nicole gave him had nothing with female acquaintances. At this moment, Rody has already learned a lot about Seth. He wouldn't be so naïve as to believe that Jojo was Seth's only lover. He wanted to know what to do if he were to encounter this problem.

However, Rody did not know how to ask this question, ever since Jojo inconvenienced him, Rody was apprehensive at how Nicole got angry over this issue. He does not want to ask this question and accidentally provoke Nicole's wrath. The consequences would be terrible

Rody listened to the gentle ringing of the carriage bells and took a deep breath. He then opened the windows of the carriage to look out.

The wide limestone road lead directly to the Imperial Academy and was filled with pedestrians. Rody looked at the buildings of the Imperial Academy that were becoming clearer. The Imperial Academy's most famous building, the White Tower, also seemed to be getting closer. The sweat at Rody's hands also started to gather.

"I wonder how is Star right now. Nicole said that she has already

released him. Would he be worried about me? There is also Instructor Shale. I suddenly disappeared and did not appear for the first-grade warriors' examination. He must be very disappointed in me. In fact, I am his favorite student. And....uh...."

Rody has never been so nervous, nor has he felt so glorified before.

The current Principal of the Imperial Academy, Sir Sowell, together with most of the important and powerful elders in the Academy, personally came out to greet him. The old guy was a very important person that a commoner like him, in normal days, would never be able to meet. Right now this person was standing at the gates, smiling. His smile lines were all bunched together forming wrinkles. He extended his hands, that looked like the chicken claws, to help Miss Nicole get down the carriage.

Rody did not truly understand Sir Sowell's flattery for Nicole and did not gain any attention or any concern for his 'sickness'. He just stood beside Nicole showing a reluctant appearance. In regards to this attitude, nobody suspected a thing. This is because everyone in the academy was aware that the Tulip family's Young Master is a playboy. It was common knowledge that Seth's role in the academy was to get himself into trouble and hated wasting his time in the academy. The amount of time he actually spent in the academy was less than the amount of time he secretly escaped the academy.

"Sir Sowell, my brother has not fully recovered. Considering that he will soon participate in the assessment to inherit the title, the time he has left in the academy is also not much. At first, I was thinking that he should not come back but then I also think that he needs some final training. As I cannot provide him with these final training, at home, I brought him here, hoping that he can receive strict instructions."

After that, Rody no longer listened to the conversation with Sir Sowell. He started to break out in cold sweat. This is because he saw several young ladies walking around. Naturally, they were also

students at the Imperial Academy. Among them, a few already threw flirtatious looks towards him. Rody understood its significance. Shit! It would seem that the playboy really did have more lovers than just Jojo!

Of course, the eyes of the male students were not so friendly towards him.

Nicole pretended to have a stern look as she made the situation clear for Rody and then while everyone is not paying attention, gave him a gentle look. After that, she went back to the carriage.

Just before leaving, Old Mark walked up to Rody and before Rody could react, he already stuffed something hard into his hand.

"If you meet with something troublesome that you cannot settle, crush that thing. No matter where you are, I will come and help you."

Chapter 42: Voyeur Skeleton

Following Seth's original schedule, Rody was brought by the Principal to the Imperial Academy's famous White Tower.

The White Tower was the Imperial Academy's tallest building. It was twenty-two storeys high and almost a hundred meters tall. It was built two hundred years ago, and was where Dandong's experimented with new spells. It later became the landmark of the Imperial Academy.

The whole tower was built using white granite shipped from the north. Every day at noon, the sun would shine on the huge magic crystal on top of the White Tower. The magic crystal would reflect the light and could be seen by everyone in the Imperial Capital. That is why the people in the Empire called it the Tower of Light.

Rody arrived there with an uneasy feeling.

This is where all the students learned different spells. The Empire's most famous magician, Elder Glenn, teaches his disciples here.

Rody's identity as a commoner meant that he was not eligible to study under Elder Glenn. As a matter of fact, the entire tower was off-limits to common civilians. Only those from the noble families have an actual opportunity to learn the teachings of Elder Glenn. There were also a few commoners that were studying there as well. This is because every two years, Elder Glenn would choose a few commoners with potential to study under him as his disciples.

Unfortunately, Rody was not so lucky. As he was from the warrior department, he does not have the chance to learn spells. However, Seth was different. He was someone who hated to use the sword and preferred more refined subjects. As a result, learning spells was indispensable. Unfortunately, based on the information given by Nicole, the genius Young Master was completely hopeless in learning spells. He was an outright playboy.

He was a complete layman whether it was in military, magic, or sorcery.

While Rody was thinking these thoughts, he slowly followed Principal Sowell up the spiral staircase. His mind also gave birth to all sorts of strange thoughts.

Just the fact that this was Dandong's old domain, filled Rody's mind with many thoughts.

These past days, he had seen and met lots of the old Dandong's creations,. Who knows what else he would discover in Dandong's old lab.

The old principal in front of him started to breathe heavily. His large buttocks constantly swayed in front of Rody. Two slender legs supporting Sir Sowell's fat body which seemed to almost give way. Rody had a difficult time understanding how a person's body could be so fat yet his hands were as slender as the talons of a chicken.

Rody wanted to kindly tell him that it was not necessary to personally send him up. However, he also knew that the old man was not going to give up the opportunity to curry favor. After all, he is currently the heir to the Empire's most influential family.

At this time, Rody suddenly heard a familiar shout. Rody was so surprised that he almost fell down the stairs.

"Aha! It has been two hundred years yet this place has not changed at all!"

This.... .. this clearly is that scary skeleton's voice!

Rody subconsciously cried out, "Andy!"

Sir Sowell immediately turned around and asked, "What? Seth, what did you say?"

"No... nothing!" Rody replied.

However, Rody's eyes wandered around looking. When did the

skeleton follow me? Did the world change so much that a skeleton can walk out in broad daylight?

"Shut up stupid!" Andy's voice rang again in his ear. "I am not around you. I am still at home!"

At home?

This time, Rody covered his mouth and fought against his urge to speak. Fortunately, Sir Sowell has already continued to walk in front and was not looking back at him.

"I am really at home. Didn't I tell you? When you wear this mask, I can see and hear the same things as you."

Rody's immediate response was to feel faint on the spot.

"Do not be so alarmed! I am the mighty skeleton and the first man made skeleton with intelligence that was created by the mighty Dandong! If I can't do this, what else can I do?" Andy's voice was excited.

If he could, Rody wanted to immediately go back and smash the skeleton to pieces! The last time, he was given an 'exceptionally good sword' only for it to get cut through by an ordinary sword during an experiment. Now this guy is also saying that by using the mask, it could see and hear the same things as him?

"What is this? Could it be that he was watching when I am eating, sleeping and in the toilet? He can see and hear everything?" Rody thought to himself.

"Don't get angry, little guy! You want to be angry? Do you even have the rights to be angry at me? I did not even go looking for you after you broke my precious sword! Yet you dare to get angry at me?" Andy's tone was filled with anger.

Rody felt so angry he was about to faint. Thankfully, he was nimble and managed to prevent himself from falling. This is because he suddenly noticed that the other party could read his mind! There was nothing he could hide from that irritating

skeleton.

"For now, shut up! Boy! I won't always follow you! You can rest assured about this! Who do you think you are? Master Dandong? I only borrow your eyes and ears temporarily. Remember! This is only temporary! We old people do not inconvenience others for no reason!"

Rody's facial expression at the moment can only be described as wonderful. For an instant, it was blue. After that, it turned red and then turned white. His face was filled with many different emotions. Unfortunately, there was nobody around to enjoy it.

Elder Glenn's lecture was on the twelfth floor of the White Tower. After going up twelve floors, Sir Sowell looked so tired and he was gasping for air.

However, Rody was no longer the same as he was in the past. He could see that at least half of the Principal's fatigue was an act to pretend that he exerted all his strength, to curry favor.

Glenn was not pleased when he saw the headmaster open the door and walked in. Glenn was even more displeased when he realised that it was the headmaster.

"Your Excellency. I remembered saying not to disturb me when I am teaching."

Elder Glenn looked as if he was at least eighty years old. He was wearing a pointed hat and a standard gray magician's robe. His long, white beard reached his chest. At this moment, the old man was looking at Sir Sowell who was still standing at the doorway.

Sowell immediately showed a smile. He does not dare to put on airs as a principal in front of Elder Glenn. Although Elder Glenn was not the most powerful magician in the Empire, he was the most reputable one. This old guy had been teaching magic spells for a long time. Even before Sir Sowell became the president, this old man has already worked for several principals in the Imperial

Academy. His disciples are mostly the wealthy nobles. Even in the Imperial Capital, there are not many that had more prestige than him. Sir Sowell cannot afford to offend such a person. Otherwise, it will not just be a matter of Elder Glenn becoming angry but all of his students will also come out and look for trouble. At that time, Sir Sowell would receive more than he bargained for.

"Elder Glenn, I brought you a student."

Sowell did not say anything but Glenn could guess that the students the principal personally sent would certainly have a impressive background. After so many years, Glenn understood this natural truth.

"Come in." Glenn softly said. He then looked at Rody who came in after the principal.

The students around Elder Glenn also looked at Rody's body.

Rody pretended to look calm and walked in steadily.

He was now at Glenn's laboratory. In the middle of the room was a table with different instruments on it. Some of the instruments were the same as the one Rody saw in the small house at home. The students were sitting in a semi-circle around the table.

Glenn squinted his eyes and looked at Rody for a moment and then whispered, "You are from the Tulip family?"

"Yes." Rody answered quickly while bowing.

"N, your blonde hair and blue eyes match your family lineage." Glenn continued to look closely at Rody and measure him up. He was so close that Rody felt uncomfortable.

"Hmph!" Andy's voice suddenly sounded in his mind. "This guy is using a probing spell to look at you! Haha, what good is that probing spell? Watch my skill!"

Before Rody could react to Andy's words, there was a large 'bang' sound in his head. He immediately looked around and saw a

horrible scene that he would never forget.

Chapter 43: A Terrifying Matter

Rody felt as if his eyes brightened. The scene in front of him totally changed. Glenn's grey robe, which was supposed to shield him, had instantly turned transparent!

Beneath the robe, the clothes also became transparent layer by layer! With one glance, Rody could see the elderly Glenn's skinny body. "My God! Is that a human's body? This is just a set of skeletons! Then there is the body hair... and..."

Rody shook his head hard. This was because he clearly saw the serious-looking elderly Glenn wearing bright red underwear!

The moment he saw that he looked away and dared not glance at Glenn anymore.

"Once again, he has the power to see through things. Damn it!"

The last time he had this power, he watched Miss Nicole change her clothes... but this time... this power made Rody feel like screaming.

The body of a charmingly fair maiden when compared to the skinny body of a ninety year old man... the difference in feeling was too great!

"Oh my God! This is a nightmare!", Rody was afraid that he would be traumatized in the future.

Thankfully, the ability to see through objects only lasted for a few moments, before that power disappeared.

However, this does not prevent Rody from going crazy.

"Andy, you detestable fellow! What are you doing?"

"Hmph, this guy is quite clever. He is actually carrying two treasured objects. Hmm, those magic crystals are really good things. Unfortunately, it only enhances a magician's power by thirty percent at most."

Rody gave a wry smile. As he did not dare to close his eyes in front of elderly Glenn, he could only try and look elsewhere.

"Idiot. I was actually helping you. That guy was using a probing spell to look at you. If not because I helped to block you, your long ears would have already been discovered!" Andy said in disdain.

"However, it was not necessary to let me see through his clothes."

Glenn observed the Tulip family's descendant in front of him. Although he found that the boy's face was a bit strange, he had not discovered anything. He did not notice any fluctuation of power within the boy.

"Another useless waste ." Glenn felt disappointed and offended. This Principal always put those aristocratic wastes with no potential in his class! It was simply a waste of his time!

"You! Go and sit at the back." Glenn's tone was cold. He then glanced at the Principal standing at the door. Its meaning was: You better leave!

Rody did not dare to look at Glenn. He could only lower his head and walked towards the group of students. While keeping his head down, he simply found a place to sit. As he was sitting down, he heard a dissatisfied person utter a soft 'hmpf'.

Glenn no longer paid attention to the student who interrupted his lesson. He continued his lesson and answered the questions of those students sitting in front of him.

Rody tried to diligently listen to the lecture but his foundation was too weak. He was someone who just entered in the middle of the lesson, so he could barely understand half of the contents. Rody looked left and right hoping to find something to help him. Suddenly, a slender hand came out from the side and placed a thick notebook in front of him.

Rody looked towards the slender hand and found a friendly black haired girl smiling at him. She was a commoner, based on the

uniform she was wearing.

"Thank you!" Rody whispered.

However, he heard a cold snort from behind

Rody did not know for how long he had sat, but he could feel his buttocks turn numb. He immediately started to daydream, as he was never really interested in learning magic. On top of that, he knew that whether he participated or not, his upcoming assessment would not be affected. Nicole's reason for him to go to the academy was mainly to give him a conducive environment so that he could further adapt to his identity.

He looked to the side and saw a few students in nobles' uniform having the same impatient expression. It would seem that they were all categorized together with him as 'ignorant and incompetent'. As for the ones who were listening attentively and deep in thought, they were commoner students.

"Really sad!" Rody sighed.

How come the nobles can get this valuable learning opportunity even though they are all talentless idiots, while the commoners have to wait for two years and then break their heads fighting for limited seats?

Thinking like this, Rody sighed again.

"Tulip family's heir!" Glenn suddenly shouted.

"What?"

"Was there something wrong with what I am saying? Why are you sighing?"

"....." Sensing a dozen pair of eyes staring at him, Rody's face turned red.

Glen's facial expression was gloomy. He did not care what the Tulip family was like. In his presence, everyone must listen to him!

"You did not listen to me at all. Am I right?" Glenn insisted.

"Yes." Rody braced himself and replied.

"Then leave!" Glenn answered seriously. "Since you are not going to listen to the lecture even if you stay in here, you might as well leave! Get out from here!"

Glenn spoke coldly without giving any room for negotiations.

Rody was sorrowful. He obligingly stood up and slowly left.

How unlucky. Chased out by Master Glenn on his first day in class. Rody had no choice but to, step-by-step, descend the spiral staircase.

"Boy, turn left!" Andy's voice sounded in his head.

"What?"

"I am telling you to turn left!" Andy ordered again.

Rody was feeling angry and then said loudly, "Why should I listen to you?" As he said that, he started to walk down the stairs faster.

Unconcerned, Andy leisurely replied, "In that case, what if I told you I will help you remove your long ears?"

"What?" Rody stopped moving. "Are you telling the truth?"

"Nonsense! Go back to that place and turn left!"

This sentence was very effective. Rody obediently backtracked to the earlier location and turned left.

In front of him was a wall.

"Isn't this just a wall?" Rody asked.

Andy also felt something was strange. He was agitated and started to speak incoherently. "Why is it a wall? Was it sealed up? It is supposed to be a door... Boy, you have a sword, use it and cut through the wall."

You must be kidding right? Cut through?! Do you think this was your own backyard? Do you know how big a havoc cutting down a wall will cause? Why don't you try it yourself?! The sword in my

hands is just an ordinary sword! How can this thin long sword cut granite? Who do you think I am? The Sacred Swordsman?

Chapter 44: A Gang of Scoundrels

"You fool! Your sword is not an ordinary sword! Master's lightsaber can even cut through a hill, much less cut through a wall."

Saber?

That absurd lightsaber? Rody became furious the moment that saber was mentioned.

"Aha! Did you get angry again? You fool! You broke such a precious saber and I haven't even punished you. You still dare to be discontented?"

Rody angrily replied. "That scrap? Don't talk about cutting through that wall, it can't even cut firewood!"

"Hah! That is because you are stupid! It is Master's lightsaber. How can it be used in a normal way?"

The moment he heard this, Rody realized his mistake. That's right. It is something Dandong left behind. How could it be useless?

At this moment, Rody suppressed his doubts and whispered. "But I did not bring it here today. I left it at home."

Andy was silent for a moment before it spoke in a reserved and depressed voice. "Forget it. Forget it. Forget about it today. But, I want you to do me a favour."

"What?"

"Tonight," Andy softly said, "Tonight, come here quietly with the lightsaber. I will teach you how to cut through the wall! Inside, there are things I want to see"

"What is in there?" Rody felt curious after hearing Andy's words.

"Nothing in particular. Those days, that was one of Master's study rooms. I think there are definitely some things that belonged

to Master in there. However, for some reason, it was sealed up."

"The study room? Rody's lips curled into a frown. He was no longer extremely curious about books. If they were books, the Tulip family's books were more than enough. The playboy's book collection was also alarming. He would not even be able to read all of them within three to five years. As soon as he heard that the room was filled with books, Rody lost interest.

Rody slowly walked down the White Tower. He only realised that it was almost noon when he came out. "Around this time, Miss Nicole's carriage should have arrived near the entrance of the Academy....I wonder if she knows that I've been chased out on my first day in class? What would she think if she knew?"

With this irritable idea, Rody casually walked on. However, he habitually walked towards a small lane. That lane led to the old dormitory for common civilians, where he used to stay.

After many days of not seeing it, the two-hundred-year-old building looked even more worn out than before. The building was covered in weeds and the doors were covered in rust.

Rody stood downstairs and looked at the window of his previous room. He saw a grey curtain at the window and it was clear that it was not one of his belongings. It would seem that the Academy has expelled him after he went missing for some time. His room was also vacated for someone else to live in.

"I wonder if my sword has already been taken by others." Rody sighed. He couldn't help but ask even though he does not really care about that sword anymore, This is because when he was training under Instructor Carter, they would break a sword, almost once every two days."

Rody looked at his old home feeling melancholic. He did not know whether he should feel happy or sad.

His identity is gone. For the time being, this person named Rody

does not exist. Now he needs to pretend and be a playboy! However, is doing this meaningful?

Rody stood downstairs for a long while having these complicated feelings.

Suddenly, a hand lightly tapped Rody's shoulder. A clear and melodious voice sounded out from behind him.

"Hey... why are you here? What are you looking at?"

Rody turned around and saw the black-haired girl who earlier shared some notes with him.

Frankly speaking, the black-haired girl's facial features were only average. However, her delicate eyebrows with some freckles on her cheeks made her more smart-looking.

"I did not look at anything in particular..." Rody shook his head. "I am just walking around... That.... Master Glenn's class. Is it over?"

"The class is over!" The girl stuck out her tongue and laughed. "You should be a noble, right? Why are you walking here? This is not somewhere you should be. This is the living area of the commoner students."

For some reasons, Rody felt calm conversing with her. Needless to say, Rody grew up in this kind of world. These days, he had to deal with nobles, their guards, and servants. Now that he is chatting with a civilian girl, Rody felt like he fell back into his comfort zone.

Rody smiled faintly. "I have friends living here."

"Your friends? You aristocrats actually make friends with commoners?"

Rody smiled softly. "I did not lie to you. I really had friends nearby."

Star should still be around. However, he would probably not

recognize Rody even if they met.

The black-haired girl also smiled back. This was because the handsome male in front of her was gentle and amiable and did not give out the arrogance of a noble.

At that time, an angry voice came from behind them.

"Hey! That playboy! Get away from Arche."

Rody looked back and saw a lean man wearing a commoner's uniform glaring at him angrily.

"Star!" Rody could not help but call out.

Star was stunned for a moment. He did not think that this playboy would actually call out his name. However, he did not bother thinking too deeply about it.

Star took a few steps towards them and pulled the black-haired girl, Arche. After pulling her a few steps away from Rody, he angrily asked, "Arche, why are you together with this kind of guy?"

Arche gently frowned. "Star, why are you being so impolite?"

Star raised his eyebrows and sneered at Rody in contempt, "Do you know who he is?"

"A noble I guess..." Arche lightly replied. "He doesn't look like a bad person."

"Bad person?" Star laughed loudly. "In the whole of the Imperial Academy, if he is not a bad person, there are no bad people. Let me tell you. This is the playboy Seth!"

"Ah!" Arche's facial expression changed. Her gentle eyes immediately changed to contempt and she quickly jumped back a few steps.

Rody made a wry smile. He really did not expect his reunion with Star to be like this.

Star stepped in front of Arche and said. "Arche. You know about

this guy's reputation. He will politely strike up a conversation but... there are no good intentions! Just ignore him!" Having said that, Star turned to Rody and coldly threatened him. "Tulip family! I am warning you! Do not touch my girlfriend! Otherwise, I will not let you go!" After finishing what he had to say, he gave Rody another threatening stare.

Girlfriend? Star actually found a girlfriend? However, Arche's blushing face means that it is true. To meet his best friend like this, Rody did not know whether to laugh or cry.

Star actually thought he was assailing his girlfriend?

At this moment, three individuals came from afar and maliciously looked at Star. From afar, the middle one shouted, "Star! Who did you say you will not let go?" The two companions that stood beside him laughed unscrupulously. The laughter was filled with disdain and ridicule.

Rody took a look at the three men in the distance.

Among them, there was a tall, thin guy with a horse-like face. He played with his long hair pretending to look elegant. However, his appearance was like the ghost of a hanged person at night.

As for the two of his companions on either side, one was tall and the other was short. The tall one looked upright and had a magnificent saber. As if he wanted to show off, the scabbard was mounted by seven or eight gems. The short one had sturdy limbs and a powerful appearance. He had an ominous glint and did not seem to be a good person.

These three people were wearing nobles' uniform. Besides that, the horse-faced person in the middle had two stars on his chest. This obviously meant that he is a Grade 2 warrior.

Rody identified these three individuals with a glance. The guy with the horse face is Prince Baron's son, who is His Majesty the Emperor's nephew, Bayan. The tall companion should be the

Finance Minister's son Didi. As for the short companion, he should be the Empire's Garrison General's son. His name... Rody thought for a moment before remembering that this vulgar looking person had a nice name. His name is Dardaniel.

These three people obviously came here to find fault with Star. That made Rody feel even more awkward because these three, according to the information, were well acquainted with Seth...

This is especially true for Didi and Dardaniel who were part of Seth's gang of scoundrels.

Chapter 45: Romantic Arena

The moment Bayan saw Seth, he showed a strange expression and laughed. "Seth, I did not think you would be back so soon! These few days, we felt less fun without you!"

Didi and Dardaniel also looked at Rody and their expressions were unnatural.

Seth and Bayan both had a high noble status and had always been the leaders among the noble children. Although Seth was a playboy, he was ambitious and arrogant and never had a good opinion of Bayan. Although the two people knew each other, their feelings of grudge were stronger than friendship.

On the other hand, Didi and Dardaniel had always been Seth's henchman. To Seth, such willing idiots who allowed him to play tricks on, he would not refuse. Moreover, Seth was a playboy and was not particularly a good person. The three of them also shared the same lustful interests and were birds of the same feather.

However, after Seth left the Academy for a while, Didi and Dardaniel who were left without a leader were soon won over by Bayan and became his henchmen. Although these nobles were not adults yet, their conversations often involved deep politics. Friendly relationships between young people meant future alliances. That was why Bayan who was ambitious, was paying attention to identify and become close with young nobles that may enter the core of nobility. This is all to enhance his future strength.

Naturally, this was not something Rody could expect. All he knew was that Didi and Dardaniel were showing some unnatural expressions. However, he does not know anything more detailed than that.

Bayan seemed more interested in Rody and therefore no longer bothered with Star. He merely spared Star a glance and said, "Star,

originally, with your status, you are not qualified to speak to me. I believe you know the reason why I came to find you today! You better not act rashly and be well behaved during Master Glenn's disciple selection next month! You can forget about the quota!"

Rody immediately understood these words.

Come to think of it, next month is when the old guy Glenn picked his disciples. Every two years, elderly Glenn would choose his disciples among a group of students and personally teach them magic. Under normal circumstances, commoners are forbidden from entering the White Tower. That would mean that their only chance to enter the White Tower was to be selected as Master Glenn's disciple once every two years. However, nobles with a strong background can directly enter Glenn's class. For example, today Rody who just arrived, obtained a special arrangement by the principal of the academy to learn from Master Glenn. With Rody's current status, Glenn had no choice. However, common nobles would still need to go through the selection process because Elder Glenn only selects a limited number of people.

Right now, Star appears to be the most likely candidate to be selected. Rody believed this because when he was still in the academy, Rody was regarded as a genius in swordsmanship while Star was regarded by the teachers as a genius in magic.

With this thought, Rody frowned. For Bayan, His Majesty's nephew and part of the dignified royal family, he should be able to bypass the selection process. So why is he fighting against Star for the quota?

However, Bayan's following words made Rody understood.

"Star, I clearly tell you. This position belongs to Didi! So you better know where you stand!" After finishing what he had to say, Bayan removed his threatening expression. Although Star was angry, he could not say anything. After all, he was just a commoner.

Even if he was recognized as a good student and liked by many teachers, he cannot afford to offend the Royal Family.

Bayan seemed to be diligent in winning the allegiance of the people around him. Although Didi was the son of an Empire's minister, it was not enough to get him inside the White Tower. The elderly Glenn's temper was well known and everybody must give him due respect as they dared not offend him. This fact was obvious by how he even dared to chase out Rody in public.

Rody felt really angry when he saw someone humiliate his best friend in front of him. He was about to speak when Andy's voice sounded out.

"Idiot! Do not say anything! If you say the wrong thing, you will risk revealing your true identity! With your current position, you can only help him secretly."

This sentence was like a bucket of cold water being poured over Rody's angry heart. Rody thought for a while and did not say anything.

The moment Bayan stopped talking, he no longer looked at Star. Star's face was ghastly pale. He could only glare at Bayan and Rody, before leaving angrily with Arche.

"Seth, why are you still sitting there? If you have nothing to do, let us find someplace to have some fun. It is too hot staying out here in broad daylight. Bayan looked at Rody and smiled. He secretly paid attention, hoping to obtain the favour of the Tulip family's heir. Even if the other party was too influential and cannot become one of his men, there would be no harm in building a good relationship.

When Didi and Dardaniel saw Seth, they initially felt ashamed but the moment they saw Bayan trying to be friendly, they immediately started to smile. "That's right Seth. We have not met for a long time. Today, we must definitely go out and have fun. We have not gone out together for a long time."

Dardaniel also patted his chest. "Let us not say anymore. Today is my treat. Let us go to that old place."

Didi plotted stealthily and smiled. "Dardaniel, it is best if you keep your mouth shut. With Young Master Bayan here, how could it be your turn to treat?"

They pulled Rody to the entrance of the academy without giving any explanations. Rody was determined to refuse but he did not know how to. He also did not dare to ask where was the 'old place' and could only let them pull him.

There was a carriage that was already parked at the entrance of the Academy. It did not have any decorations in peculiar places or any gorgeous modifications. However, the golden flower and thorns design on the carriage shows it's owner's noble identity. It was the crest of the Empire's Royal Family!

The moment they entered the carriage, Bayan immediately took out a few bottles of wine from a secret compartment under the seat. He handed Rody the first bottle and smiled. "This is His Majesty's tribute from the South. Go ahead and try it."

Dardaniel immediately cheered and started drinking one bottle. Rody neither laughed nor cried. He merely coped with the people and the wine. The surroundings began to become warm. They engaged in idle talk and talks about women. There were also stories that made Rody feel embarrassed. Most of the stories about women had something to do with Seth. Rody could only vaguely cope looking at the three faces that were giving him smiles that were unlike smiles. He feared that if he said something wrong, he would make them suspicious.

The carriage moved quickly on the road. Although the streets were crowded with pedestrians and other carriages, they gave way the moment they saw the crest on the carriage.

After crossing a few main streets, with an increasing number of pedestrians, the carriage finally stopped at an intersection.

Immediately, the three young masters with overbearing attitudes showed a careful expression. Didi opened the curtains and looked outside for a moment. He then opened the door and jumped out the carriage. He was followed by Dardaniel and Bayan. Rody had no choice but to follow them.

Bayan waved and gave a signal. The driver immediately understood and left together with the carriage. Bayan then led the way. Rody and the other two followed him to another street.

Rody was following at the back with a mind full of questions. He finally asked lightly. "What do we need to be so careful for?"

After asking, Rody regretted because the guys already made it clear that they were going to the 'old place'. There must be a reason for them to be so careful. He could have accidentally revealed his true identity by asking that question.

Bayan merely turned around and smiled. Fortunately, he did not suspect anything but lightly said. "Seth, you are really audacious and unafraid of anything. You truly exceeded your reputation as a playboy. However, I am different. I am someone from the Royal Family. I must naturally be careful when I come to this kind of place."

Careful? This place?

Rody felt that things are becoming bad. This was especially true when he saw the beautifully decorated building and became stupefied.

Once the huge red door was opened, a long red carpet could be seen from the entrance all the way inside. There were already a lot of carriages stopped in front of the entrance and there were men looking in and refusing to leave.

Several women in exposing outfits were standing near the entrance, giving the young men charming eyes, from time to time. There were also a number of ferocious-looking men standing at

both sides of the door. Inside the building was filled with a lot of noise and laughter.

At the moment, even if Rody was a fool, he should already know what kind of place this was.

Chapter 46: Song of an Unrivalled Beauty

When Rody and the other three entered the doorway, they were immediately surrounded by a few women. The women leaned towards them with their savoury bodies. Rody's face immediately turned red but he did not know how to get away from the women at both his sides.

“Go! Get out and greet the other guests! Young Master Seth is not interested in inferior women like you.” A middle-aged woman immediately came out and chased away the women surrounding the four of them.

The woman was over forty years old but she still managed to preserve her charm. Her peach-coloured eyes were very powerful and could seduce the souls of men. She was probably much better when she was younger.

“Young Master Seth, you haven't come here for a while...! Your Excellency Bayan! You are such an infrequent customer! Look at my eyes! Why are you hiding at the back? Are you shy? Young Master Didi, Young Master Dardaniel, did you come here to fool around as well?” That woman was so smooth with her words that she could completely entertain four people at once.

Rody was feeling too nervous to speak. Meanwhile, Bayan scolded in jest. “Madam Sophie, enough superfluous words. Bring us the most beautiful women!”

The four then followed Madam Sophie into the hall.

Rody has never been to a place of debauchery like this. The floor of the hall inside was covered by a layer of thick carpet, imported from the West. The smell of perfume and alcohol was in the air, causing the customers to feel dizzy. More than ten tables were arranged in a circle in the hall. In the middle of the circle were six dancing women wearing revealing red clothing. Rody has never seen that type of dance before. The dancers all wore a thin veil and

were barefooted. Their bodies were lithe and when they swayed, the veil would move and expose their graceful bodies. There were already a lot of guests at the tables. There were some strong looking warriors and well-dressed businessmen from foreign countries. There were even some that gave a surprised expression when they saw Seth and Bayan's group. They were probably officials of the Empire. The only thing all the guests had in common was that they each have at least one or two women at their sides, laughing happily and teasingly.

On the left side of the hall, was a small table. Hidden behind a transparent bead curtain, on that table, was also a harp. It was about half as tall as an average person. That harp was made out of pure gold. A woman in white was gently plucking the strings of the harp with her hands, giving out a wonderful melody. The dancers in the hall were also dancing to the music.

Rody who has never experienced this before in his life immediately slowed down and fell to the back. His eyes could not look away from the seductive bodies of the dancers. However, Bayan seemed to be completely oblivious and continued to follow Madam Sophie. He did not even spare a glance at the attractive scenes in the hall and continued leading his people to the back.

Going up the stairs and after a few turns, Madam Sophie led the four of them into a small compartment. The moment they entered the compartment, they could no longer hear the dancing and singing in the hall. It would seem that the sound insulation in this compartment is remarkable.

Earlier, in the middle of the hall, there were some single tables arranged. The three of them also came early to claim their seats. Rody sighed and could only sit down next to Bayan.

Madam Sophie smiled and clapped lightly. The side door immediately opened, as a woman came walking out.

The woman was all dressed in white. She looked like a dignified

beauty but upon closer inspection, the opening of her skirt was split up to her thighs.

With each step, the skirt moved, revealing her legs. Contrary to expectations, she had the expression of someone who is calm, pure and dignified. The great contrast in appearance made the guys itched. Didi and Dardaniel kept staring. They hardly moved their eyes and continued to focus at the swaying skirt.

Didi laughed and was the first to speak, “Good! Sophie! I like this one! Ask her to come over here!” Dardaniel also seemed like he wanted to say something but the moment Didi spoke up, he decided to stay silent. However, his face exposed an unnatural expression.

Bayan looked at him and smiled. “Dardaniel, do not be disheartened. I am sure Madam Sophie will pick another good one for you. Right?”

Sophie did not say anything. She merely smiled as she waited for the white-clothed woman to sit down beside Didi. She nodded to her and then raised her hands to lightly clap again.

Sure enough, another woman came out from the side door.

This woman dressed completely different from the first one. She was tall and well developed. Her upper body was only wearing a thin sleeveless garment. The garment was wrapped around the body yet did not seem to be able to conceal the flaming chest. Her short skirt also revealed her slender, long legs. Every step had the intention of seducing others. However, the most extraordinary thing was her captivating expression. Her eyes were like hooks that hooked away Dardaniel’s soul.

Dardaniel’s displeasure had long since disappeared. The moment that woman appeared in front of him, he quickly reached out for her.

Sophie gave a faint smile before glancing at Bayan and said,

“Your Excellency Bayan. Rolin is currently changing and will take a while more.” She then glanced at Rody and gave a strange smile. “Young Master Seth, how would you like it arranged?”

Rody felt embarrassed and did not know what to say. However, with a laugh, Bayan rushed to speak. “Nonsense. Naturally, according to regulations! Quickly go down!”

Sophie smiled faintly and gave another glance to Rody before she finally went down. After a while, they heard gentle footsteps from the side.

Rody suddenly smelled a fragrance. The fragrance was different from the smell of perfume used by most women. It was like the smell of fresh flowers that could coolly seep into the hearts of people.

Then the side entrance slowly opened and a gentle and graceful figure slowly walked in. This woman was different compared to the previous two women. Her eyebrows were like a crescent moon and eyes like peaches. Her delicate mouth smiled, showing a dimple on her left cheek. Her long white skirt was also extraordinary and seemed to be made by an expert. One glance was enough to tell that this woman had ladylike qualities and was unlike a prostitute.

The woman walked slowly towards Bayan’s side and gave a shallow smile. She gently said, “Rolin greets Your Excellency Bayan.”

Rody suddenly remembered a phrase he read from a book.

The fragrance preceded the perfume. Just a dab was enough to steal a lady's heart.

Bayan beamed in joy and pretended to be reserved. He only let Rolin sit by his side. Fortunately, he did not display Didi's and Dardaniel's monkey-like manners.

Now that those three people had someone to accompany them,

except for Rody. Didi laughed and said, “Seth is still the best! If not for him, we will not come here today and will not have the chance to see the ‘sorrowful’ [Miss Myka](#).”

Bayan raised his eyebrows and thought to himself but did not say anything.

Suddenly, at that moment, there was a loud “bang” The door was forcefully pushed open by someone and a woman walked in with large strides.

The woman wore a long black dress and did not have any unnecessary accessories. She could be regarded as extremely simple. Her gentle and radiant black hair was also tied behind her in a simple manner. Her face does not seem to be coated in any kind of powder and looked extremely simple. It is evident that she came without any makeups.

However, the moment this woman appeared, all the other women in the room, including Rolin, was immediately overshadowed.

This woman, although she did not have any form of accessories on her, still seemed to be extremely beautiful. The moment she saw Rody, her eyebrows raised for a moment and then she showed a bitter expression. Her eyes, which were like the cold stars of the Heavens, gazed at him resentfully and seemed like she was going mad. A drop of crystal-like tears started to flow gently from her eye and her sad expression would make any man brokenhearted.

Bayan’s face showed a stunned expression. His eyes swept across the scene.

The woman looked at Rody for a long time before she slowly approached him. Her body was slender and graceful. Her every step was faithful to her appearance. Didi and Dardaniel had also been watching her until their eyes were frozen.

When Myka approached Rody, she suddenly gave him a hateful

glare. She stretched out a hand and then threw something onto Rody's chest and bitterly said. "Seth. You dared to come and see me. This thing... I'm returning it to you!"

Rody subconsciously picked up the object to find that it was a badge with a silver flame, which was the crest of the Tulip family. Seeing the beauty's sorrowful face, Rody's mind became blank. He could only hear his heart beating....

While everybody was still stunned looking at Myka, suddenly, there was a loud crashing sound. The door of the pavilion flew open and hit both sides of the wall.

Walking through the doorway in big strides was a guy about two metres tall. He was extremely huge and wore leather armour. He was also draped with an animal hide. He was bald and had a face so ferocious he looked like he was going to eat other people. The women in the hall all became afraid. "Ah!" They all screamed and trembled. Even Myka moved backwards and hid behind Rody.

Didi and Dardaniel became angry. "What a joke! There are people in the Imperial Capital that dare to offend us?"

Didi and Dardaniel had already drew out their swords. They shouted as they rushed forward.

There were two whacking sounds. The two men rush forward but before they even attacked, the robust man kicked one of them, who flew and fell onto the floor, unable to get up again.

The name Myka (繆歌) has many different ways of reading. Among these are, Miao Ge, Mou Ge, Mu Ge, and Miu Ge. Among the possible names that I could use, are Myla and Myra. Since the name ends with Ge, I decided to go for Myka.

Chapter 47: Fierce Fight in the Courtesan Quarters

“Who is so bold?” Bayan looked brave but he could barely stand up straight. He tried to show a calm expression but his slightly trembling voice betrayed him.

Appearing like the wind was Miss Sophie. She came out from the side looking as if she just experienced hardships and shouted. “Who dares to behave atrociously!” Sophie was aware of the identity of her guests and knew that not many people in the Empire would dare offend them. As a result, her voice was louder than usual.

As soon as Sophie shouted, at least 7 to 8 robust men immediately came running out from the side door. Each man held a long black rod, while two of the leading men also held swords. It looked like they were warriors.

When Bayan saw the men that appeared, he calmed down and shouted. “Enough nonsense! Kill him! I will be responsible for his death!”

The intruder laughed in disdain. At this time, from behind the intruder, a man calmly walked in. The man was also tall and he wore the clothing of a noble’s attendant. His yellow hair and long nose made it evident that he was from a different nation. His face was squarish and he had a sturdy body. His whole body seemed to emit a violent and murderous smell. Rody had seen such temperament before from Randt at home when he swung his sword. The man’s eyes swept across and then he laughed in disdain. “Kill us? Do you have the ability?”

Bayan looked unhappy. He had never met anyone who dared to be so presumptuous towards him before in the Imperial Capital. He looked at the foreigner and immediately exclaimed. “Why are you standing there like idiots? Kill the both of them!”

When they heard the order, the robust men roared and rushed forward. Rody watched and frowned. He had a bad feeling about this.

Sure enough, before the guards could reach the front, the barbarian already punched down a few of them with his fists. Before the two warriors could even slash, one was punched in his chest and flew away before he could even groan. The other warrior had his sword grabbed and broke into two by the barbarian with his arm strength.

The warrior was stunned. He did not know whether he should continue to attack desperately or turn around and flee.

The barbarian laughed as he grabbed the warrior by the lapel, easily lifting him up before throwing him out of the room.

“So, this is the strength of your ‘warriors’?” The man wearing the noble’s clothing laughed.

Bayan’s face turned pale. His hand held onto the hilt of his sword but hesitated to unsheathe.

Rody slowly stood up and stared at the barbarians. Myka hid behind him and trembled slightly. One of her hands held tightly onto his shirt.

“Who are you?” Bayan gnashed his teeth. “Do you not know who we are?” Although his words were meant to intimidate, it ended up showing his cowardice.

“I am the prince of the Great Moon Kingdom, [Sultan](#)! Do I care about who you are? Not only you, even if your Emperor were here he would need to be polite with me!” Sultan smiled coldly. Suddenly, he saw Myka hiding behind Rody. He showed a stunned expression before smiling. “I have finally found you! I came here looking for the Imperial Capital’s famous beauty Miss Myka. I do not want anything else. I just want to see her and now I want to take her with me. Nothing will happen if you all behave.”

Sultan smiled and walked towards Rody. He then stretched out his hands to pull Myka.

Rody was angry and whispered. “Do not worry! I am here. I will not let him take you.”

Myka was shivering but showed a surprised expression when she heard what Rody said. She noticed Rody had a strange look.

“Move aside.” Sultan glared at Rody.

Rody pulled Myka behind him and said in return, “Get lost!”

Bayan’s face turned purple and quietly said. “Seth... Enough.... Forget it.”

Rody spared Bayan a cold glance and spoke again. “No!”

“No?” Sultan laughed loudly. He spoke loudly and eagerly. “We have defeated several tens of thousands of your troops.! We have even defeated your high-ranking warriors! In comparison, who are you?”

Rody gritted his teeth and stared at Sultan, in front of him. Without saying a word, Rody pulled out his sword.

Although he did not know who Myka was, he knew that she was probably one of Seth’s lovers. As a man, in this scenario, it was absolutely impossible to retreat.

“Good!” Sultan raised his eyebrow. “It seems like you still have a backbone! [Rondor](#)! Kill him!” He then stepped back and watched Rody with interest.

The barbarian immediately strode up and looked at Rody, from head-to-toe. He grinned and smiled. “Young boy! Come on!” the barbarian said. He then gave Rody a punch to knock him down.

Rody snorted. He reacted by slashing at the arm of Rondor. However, he only heard the sound of metal clashing. Rondor’s arm was not injured in the slightest.

“Fool! He has an armguard!” Andy’s voice sounded in his ears.

Soon, the other party started to smash around wildly. Rody did not dare to confront him head on, and he could only dodge. These days, his training of the whipping technique by Instructor Carter may not have improved his swordsmanship, but it had certainly improved his agility.

With a loud bang, the table that Rondor hit was split into two. The wines and dishes on the table were scattered everywhere. Rody took this opportunity to go around Rondor and slashed his waist. Once again, he heard the sound of metal clashing and did not manage to injure Rondor.

He must be wearing an armor! Rody suddenly thought.

Rody relying on his swiftness, continuously moved around Rondor while slashing him. Each slash was met with the sound of metal clashing. Although Rondor had already been slashed several times, with that armor he was wearing, those slashes could not injure him.

Rody then roared and aimed for his head but Rondor held his hands high to block it.

As soon as the sword slashed the arms, sparks appeared. Rody quickly jumped and kicked Rondor in the chest with all his strength. Rondor who was kicked, stepped back a few steps and shook his head. His eyes showed an ominous glint.

Rody held the sword with both of his hands and watched his opponent vigilantly. However, he has already started to breathe heavily.

Earlier, with those few strokes, Rody had already shown off his swordsmanship. Whether it was speed or skill, they were both good. Unfortunately, that had no effect on the monster in front of him and he really had no way out.

“Fool! If you continue fighting like this, you will end up dead!” Andy exclaimed.

“What else can I do? That person is wearing such tough armor. No matter how I slash or stab, it does not affect him at all. He also has extremely frightening strength. I already kicked him as hard as I could but it only pushed him back 2 steps. Unless it is a broadsword or a lance, I would not be able to hurt him. But in my hands is just a normal sword, thin and long. It has no power at all.”

“What lance? If you had used that lightsaber, you would have already defeated him.” Andy roared angrily at Rody.

These words gave Rody an idea. He moved back and put both his hands on the hilt of the sword. He stared at Rondor quietly.

“What’s wrong? Don’t you want to fight anymore? Surrender?” Rondor sarcastically roared.

Rody said nothing but coldly glared back.

Sultan was initially laughing but his face soon changed. There was something odd about the young man in front of him.

Rondor also became vigilant. He saw his opponent took a deep breath and lifted his sword.

Suddenly Rondor saw his opponent open his bright eyes and a dim golden light radiated from his body. The room suddenly dimmed as the light concentrated on Rody’s sword. The sword that was supposed to only be made of iron was suddenly emitting a bewitching golden light.

Sultan’s face became discolored as he involuntarily shouted. “Fighting energy? You actually know how to use fighting energy?”

Rondor eyes stung for a brief moment, and before he could clearly see, the sword had already slashed down.

When he noticed the silver-colored edge of the sword, half the height of a man striking down, it was already too late to dodge. Without a choice, he raised his arms to block it, protecting his head and chest.

After a loud bang, the lightsaber could be seen slashing Rondor's arms. He screamed and his steel armguards immediately broke. Rondor's body moved back about half a meter before flying and crashing into a wall, destroying a cabinet in the process.

His clothes were torn and the armor underneath was also tattered. Blood was all over his body. Even half of his pants was gone, revealing his black hairy thigh. There were also some deep bloodstained cuts.

Rondor's entire body trembled, as he struggled to stand up. However, he could not move. He eventually fainted.

Sultan, who had lost his earlier arrogant demeanor, rushed to Rondor and checked on his injury. He then stood up and said. "Good! Good! You actually broke his arms and ribs. What is your name? With that kind of skill, you cannot be an ordinary person!"

The moment Rody used that sword, he felt like his strength was drained. He felt weak as though he was going to faint. He struggled to stay standing. "I am Seth! Tulip family's Seth!"

Sultan showed a somewhat astonished face. "Good. The Tulip family's heir! Truly well-deserved reputation! I will remember it!"

A few foreigners wearing animal hide then rushed into the room and quickly lifted Rondor. Sultan looked at those few men in the room and left with them, without saying anything else.

Bayan sighed gently and whispered to Rody. "Don't bother them anymore. Let them go."

Rody already had no more strength. He could only smile and nodded after listening to those words.

The moment Sultan and his men were out of sight, Rody felt that he could hold on anymore as he swayed and collapsed. With a pondering expression, Myka who was behind him quickly rushed over to support Rody.

Original name given was Song Zan. As this is a translation of

Chinese to English, a lot of the names used by the author such as the main character 'Luo Di' has been translated to the obvious English version Rody. However, some names like Song Zan are very vague in terms of its English version. Therefore, I did some research on names starting with 'S'. The names that I found are Songaa and Sultan. Songaa means 'Strong' in Native American while Sultan means 'Authority' in Arabic. Since Song Zan is a Prince, I decided to go for Sultan.

Original name given is Long Duo Er or Long Duor. Since Luo Di is Rody, I assumed that it is a name that starts with R to form 'Rondo'. However, the Chinese name had three characters with the last one being Er. This made me feel like the name ended with an 'Er' sound and so his name became Rondor.

Chapter 48: Change in Situation

Didi and Dardaniel had long been carried away. Meanwhile, Madam Sophie's face was pale and she was terrified. She was a wise person and understood that the current problem was not a small problem. Sultan made it clear that he was the prince of the Great Moon Kingdom and was probably a diplomatic envoy. On the other hand, Bayan was also an important aristocrat. Bayan and Young Master Seth were the Emperor's nephew and the heir to the family with the greatest military exploits. The injured Didi and Dardaniel also have important backgrounds. With such an incident, there might be an investigation and she might need to bear responsibilities.

Bayan was displeased. Although he did not voice it out, he was arguing in his heart. He naturally understood the purpose of the Great Moon Kingdom's envoy. The reason involved political business between the two countries. However, he ended up fighting with them in a prostitute house. The number of problems that would arise from that would not be small. He no longer has any intention to seek pleasure. He just justified himself and prepared to leave. He wanted to quickly return home and discuss with his father as to how to deal with the problem.

On the other hand, Rody was weak and was brought into a room by a few servants. He found that the decorations in the room were simple yet elegant and the bed was soft like the clouds. A nearby table had a incense burner exuding a sweet and enticing aroma.,

The servants left immediately after placing him in the room. Rody laid down for a while and could feel himself recovering. Although he did not suffer any injuries, that last attack was something more than what his body could withstand.

He heard a light creaking sound. Then the door opened and a beautiful figure slowly walked in.

Myka slowly walked to the bedside and looked at Rody who was lying down on the bed with a bewildered expression.

Rody also felt agitated but he was determined not to speak first.

So they stared at each other for a long time until Myka finally sighed. The heavy sigh was like a complaint for causing endless worry. She then took out, from the table in front of the bed, a small black bottle and unscrewed the cap. She handed the bottle over and spoke softly. "Drink this. This is something someone else gave me. I heard that it is good for internal injuries."

Rody took the bottle and was pondering for a moment whether to consume its contents or not, when suddenly Myka asked, "Tell me. Who are you?"

"What?" Rody's hands trembled and he nearly dropped the bottle.

Myka's eyes slowly and gently studied Rody's face and lightly said. "Stop pretending. You are not Seth! Who are you and why are you pretending to be him?"

Rody felt that his mouth was dry while his mind was screaming. Shit! Shit! The secret is exposed!

"You do not need to be nervous." Myka smiled gently. However, her smile did not contain any hint of happiness. "I will not expose your identity. If I had wanted to expose your identity, I would have done so earlier. In fact, I want to thank you for protecting me earlier."

"How do you know that I am not Seth?" Rody thought for a long time before he cautiously asked.

Myka shook her head and whispered. "You are definitely not him. First of all, he was not as strong as you. Also... you..." Myka's face turned red before continuing. "I know, he had already left the Imperial Capital."

"What?"

Myka sighed. “The night he left, he came to see me.”

Rody’s face turned red. “You and him.... You are his....”

“I am not somebody close to him,” Myka replied lightly. The tone of her voice was light as if it does not contain any emotion. “He came that night and told me that he was going to leave the Imperial Capital and just wanted to say goodbye. I asked if he could take me along but then he lied to me.”

Myka gently raised her hands to show the silver family crest. It was the same one she threw into Rody’s arms. It was not known as to when she retrieved it.

When Rody heard this, he secretly sighed to himself. He understood the meaning of Myka’s words. He knew that Seth was a playboy and would definitely have relationships with more women than just Myka. It was already quite an unexpected task for him to come and bid farewell to Myka before his departure. For that playboy with a free and uninhibited nature, it would be impossible to take a woman along while pursuing his dreams. To him, women would only be a burden.

Myka smiled in a self-depreciating manner. “When I saw you earlier, I thought Seth has returned. I did not know whether I was happy or angry. But as soon as you spoke, I knew that you were not Seth.”

Rody smiled wryly. “I knew that this is not something I can keep a secret forever.” After a while, Rody whispered. “I am sorry.”

“You don’t need to say that to me.” Myka calmly replied. “I want to thank you for saving me earlier and for helping me to untie the knot in my heart.”

“In that case, now....”

“I am alright.” Myka smiled faintly. “My heart feels very calm. Whatever feelings I had is now gone.”

The two then became silent for a while. Rody did not know what

was appropriate to say. Facing a sad woman, he really lacked the experience and did not even know how to say any consoling words. Moreover, the woman was an amazing beauty. Her every move was filled with elegance to the extent that Rody did not dare to stare. For a moment, Rody could not help but feel jealous of Seth for having the admiration of such a beauty. Yet, Seth was cruel enough to walk away from her.

The silence was finally broken when someone came in to inform them that the Tulip family had sent someone over to pick up Young Master Seth.

Myka nodded and looked at Rody. “Are you okay? Can you move?” Although her tone was flat, her gentle voice could stir the hearts of those who heard it.

Rody nodded and struggled to sit up on the bed. To begin with, he was not injured and was just lying down to restore his energy. Although he had not fully recovered, he could still move around.

“Thank you, Miss Myka. Also....”

“Don’t worry. I will not reveal your secret.” Myka casually mentioned. “From today onwards, I have nothing to do with that person. As for your business, I have nothing to do with it as well.”

Rody sighed, turned around and was about to leave but before he could, Myka suddenly shouted.

“What is your name?!”

“Rody!”

Myka lightly looked at Rody’s face, frowned and coldly said. “The situation in the Imperial Capital is constantly changing, full of power struggles. As a youngster, you must be careful.”

“I know.” Rody nodded. When he saw Myka looking away from him and staring blankly out of the window, he sighed and continued walking out of the room.

For a moment, for whatever reason, Rody felt distressed.

Suddenly his mind had a strange thought. If I were really Seth, would she still use such an indifferent attitude towards me?

The person picking up Rody was Randt. The trouble stirred up here was immediately reported to the Tulip family. Randt was already waiting impatiently in the hall. He felt great relief only when he saw Rody appearing perfectly fine.

“Young Master Seth. It is good that you are alright.”

Rody nodded and followed Randt out.

The guests were already long gone. The guards of the Imperial Capital were at the entrance, investigating. However, the moment they saw Rody, they respectfully gave way to him.

Outside, the carriage was already waiting for Rody. Randt waited for Rody to get onto the carriage before getting onto his horse.

“You got into trouble again!” Rody saw Nicole sitting at the innermost seat, the moment he got onto the carriage. Her face seemed heavy.

For some reason, Rody did not feel like arguing with Nicole. He just quietly sat beside her.

Nicole also noticed Rody’s difference in behavior and felt strange. After thinking for a while, she could not help but ask. “You... are you hurt?”

Her words were filled with concern and made Rody’s heart melt. He felt that Miss Nicole was more gentle and pleasant as compared to Myka’s indifferent attitude earlier. He whispered back. “I am sorry. I just did not expect you to come and fetch me.”

“When I heard the news, I could not sit still,” Nicole spoke softly as she showed her concern.

Rody felt warm and held Nicole’s hand.. softly saying, “Nicole, I am sorry. I have disappointed you.”

Nicole blushed and tried to remove his hands but her heart did not want to. She could only sigh and asked, “Why did you come... to this place?”

Rody explained about how he met Bayan and the other two people in the academy. He then explained about how they dragged him here and their conflict with Prince Sultan. Nicole’s eyebrow wrinkled quietly.

Naturally, Rody kept the fact that Myka saw through his identity. For some reason, he did not want Nicole to know about Myka.

When Rody finished, Nicole’s facial expression changed and she said again. “Rody, this time you are really in trouble.”

“Why?” Rody was puzzled. “Is it because of Sultan’s identity? He is just a prince but Bayan is the Emperor’s nephew and I am currently also the heir of the Tulip family. Do we need to fear him?”

Nicole smiled gently. “You are naturally not afraid of him, but the Empire is currently afraid of the Great Moon Kingdom.”

“Why?”

Nicole looked at Rody and spoke slowly. “You did not know. Last month, in the Western Papans Grasslands, the Empire and the Great Moon Kingdom were at war. The Empire suffered a crushing defeat. The Northwest Legion had 200,000 soldiers but now less than half remains! Right now, the Great Moon Kingdom’s 80,000 armored cavalry is occupying the Rostock province. The Great Moon Kingdom is now assembling in the northwest city of Mudan and is eyeing the territory of the Western Empire.”

Chapter 49: Imperial Family Guards

Rody thought about Nicole's words quietly. The current him was no longer an ignorant youth. These past few days, he did not only learn about swordmanship but also about scholarly knowledge. As a result, he was no longer ignorant of the world.

Rody of course, understood the situation the Empire was facing right then, after its crashing defeat in the war.

The damage to the Northwest Legion was enough to say that the whole Legion was defeated. The entire northwest territory was now completely undefended and could be captured by the Great Moon Kingdom. Although the Empire's total military strength was still stronger than that of the Great Moon Kingdom, it was not possible to mobilize the North Legion and South Legion so easily. At that moment, there were only two possible purposes for the Great Moon Kingdom's prince to come to the Empire as a diplomatic envoy.

The first possibility was to declare war! However, this was unlikely as the Kingdom's overall strength was unlikely to be able to defeat the Empire, in a full-scale war. Even if it was to declare war, there was no reason for the prince to personally come as an envoy. They would probably send other people as envoys. This was because the Emperor might order the execution of the envoy in a fit of anger.

The second possibility would be negotiating peace! Rody believes that the possibility of this was greater. This was because after the crushing defeat, the situation had become dire in the northwest region. The Empire would also be more willing to take some humiliation to buy time and build up forces.

If Prince Sultan really did come to negotiate peace, then his earlier actions would really lead him to disaster. Rondor, the person that he seriously injured could also be one of Sultan's

generals. As a result, that conflict could be considered a serious diplomatic matter, even if the person he injured was just a bodyguard. If Sultan deliberately wants to make a big issue out of the incident, the peace negotiations would become more difficult. This would also cause the Empire a big problem, because there was no way to justify beating up the diplomatic envoy in their own capital.

The two sat in silence while the guards escorted them back to the mansion.

When the carriage arrived at the entrance, from a distant, they could see about 20 horses near the entrance of the Tulip family's mansion. There were also about two dozen knights standing, on both sides, waiting. All of the knights were tall and sturdy. They wore golden armors and had a specialized sheath for their swords. Their helmets had a long, red tassel.

At a glance, Nicole knew they were the Imperial family's guards and was surprised to see them.

When Rody and Nicole got down the carriage, a middle-aged leader of the knights walked up to them. He gave a bow of respect and then spoke neither haughtily nor humbly. "I am Gordon, the commander of the Imperial Guards. His Majesty has summoned the Tulip family's heir, Seth. Please follow me to meet His Majesty."

As soon as they heard it, Rody and Nicole exchanged glances and had the same thought. They are very fast!

Nicole was unmoved. She lightly replied. "Alright! Let my brother change his clothes first. After that, he will follow you to have an audience with His Majesty."

The deputy commander Gordon did not dare to oppose. He just nodded his head and said softly. "Yes. In that case, we will wait here."

Nicole led Rody into the mansion and immediately instructed a servant to change his clothes. Rody changed from the Imperial Academy's uniform into a common noble warrior's uniform. As he has not inherited the title yet, he was unable to wear the uniform meant for audiences with His Majesty. The clothing Rody wore was warrior uniform but with a lot of accessories. However, the most conspicuous accessory on the clothing was the Tulip family's crest.

Nicole did not look too good and whispered. "How are you feeling right now? If you are not feeling well, I can tell them that you were injured from the fight and cannot go temporarily. In this case, His Majesty would be unable to force you to have an audience with him."

Rody shook his head and sternly said. "That won't do. Nicole, this cannot be done. I just only accompanied you back and the guards were also already waiting for us which explains that His Majesty is aware of what happened. Chances are he also knows that I am not injured. On top of that, Gordon has already seen me. We can no longer tell them that I am injured."

Nicole sighed and looked at Rody. "I did not expect you to be able to think so clearly. However, it happened so fast... we had not thought of a good countermeasure."

Rody nodded his head. "There is no time left. I will have to adapt. Nicole... I am just worried that His Majesty could see through my disguise."

Nicole pondered deeply before she said. "He should not be able to. His Majesty has hardly met Seth and should not be able to see through your disguise. I have also already taught you the basic courtesy. There should not be a big flaw. I only worry..."

"What?"

Nicole sighed. "I am afraid that His Majesty the Emperor actually dislikes my brother."

“Why?” Rody frowned.

Looking strange, Nicole answered. “Because of Jojo!” She continued before Rody could speak. “Originally, I did not know about my brother and Jojo’s relationship but I think that secret could not be kept from His Majesty. Did you know? His Majesty is really attracted to Jojo. Jojo has been in the Imperial Capital for a very long time. Although she was the Empress’s sister, His Majesty did not bestow the ‘Princess’ title to her. This is probably because he wants to have Jojo”

Rody made a wry smile. “So you are saying that His Majesty may know about Seth and Jojo’s relationship and may hate me very much?”

Nicole shook her head and forced a smile. “That is also one of the problems I am worried about. However, His Majesty is unlikely to raise such matters openly. Today, the most important thing is to solve the problem of your dispute with the Great Moon Kingdom’s envoy... In other words, whatever the punishment is given to you, you will have to bear it.”

Rody gave a cold smile. “What else can they do? How can they push the responsibility to Bayan? He is His Majesty’s nephew!”

Nicole sighed and did not say anything. She only concentrated on fixing Rody’s uniform. Rody also did not say anything because he knows that nothing that he says would help him. He can only take a step at a time.

Before leaving, Rody thought for a moment and asked a servant to bring him the lightsaber hanging on the wall in his room. Although he did not know how to use that saber, having it somehow makes him calm. Even though he could move right now, that earlier fight had used up all of his energy, especially that last attack which almost made him collapse. Although he feels better right now, he was still unable to fight. He just wants to carry that saber to build up his courage to defend himself if needed.

Nicole led Rody out to board the carriage. According to her intention, she wanted to accompany Rody. However, the deputy commander Gordon refused her request.

“His Majesty the Emperor said he only wants to meet Young Master Seth. Miss Nicole, please stay at home.” Gordon said lightly. Noticing the fearful look on Nicole’s face, Gordon’s heart went soft and then whispered to Nicole. “Miss Nicole, do not worry. His Majesty already seems to know what happened when he gave me the order. However, His Majesty seems to be in a good mood and did not seem angry. Nothing should happen to Young Master Seth.”

Nicole froze for a moment and looked at Gordon, surprised. She could not understand why Gordon was on her side.

Gordon showed a solemn look and nodded to Nicole. He softly said. “I was one of the Duke’s subordinates many years ago.”

Nicole calmed down and nodded her head in gratitude.

When Rody got onto the carriage, Gordon gave an order and the twenty odd knights got on their horses.

Chapter 50: Glory and Disgrace

The Imperial Palace was built in the center of the Empire, more than 400 years ago when the Empire was founded. It was an enormous structure built using granite shipped from the north. From the Empire's few centuries' worth of history, Rody learned that the Empire had gone through many hardships and wars. Rody was unable to remember them all.

During the Empire's 49th year, the Empire was at war with the Northern Roland Continent and entered a moment of crisis. The granite palace became the last military stronghold. Both sides had about 200,000 soldiers and they fought at the fort of the palace for a total of 17 days. Finally, the third Duke of the Tulip Family led 100,000 soldiers that helped to repel the enemy and defend the palace.

During the Empire's 109th year, there was an internal strife. The emperor was assassinated by a rebellious minister. The rebellious minister then put a prince there and controlled him like a puppet. After that, the sixth Duke of Tulip Family ran away from the Imperial Capital. Fifteen days later, he came back to the Imperial Capital with 9,000 soldiers. They took six days to break through the city walls and later fought 20,000 rebels for two days and two nights. The duke personally killed the rebellious leader, Davis and continued to attack the Imperial City with thousands of soldiers. Due to that war, the river near the walls turned red with blood for a full two weeks, before returning to its original color.

During the Empire's 209th year, after the internal strife the most outstanding emperor in the whole of Empire's history, Abbas the Great ascended the throne. Abbas was the Empire's greatest emperor in their 400 years of history. However, during his reign he was also the emperor that killed the most people. Abbas had the support of the Tulip Family and killed more than 1,000 of the ministers and kinsmen that opposed his rule. That included his

younger brother and his uncle. About 100 years later, the Empire once again experienced a bloody baptism. On that night, the whole Empire was filled with shrilled screams and the stench of the blood. After a heavy downpour, the whole Empire was covered in red.

During the 30 years of Abbas the Great's reign, he created the Empire's formidable cavalry. The cavalry was well known in the mainland as the Lightning God Legion. Under Abbas' great leadership and the Tulip Family's outstanding commands, the cavalry conquered the entire continent. Only in the mainland at the Northwest Grasslands, was there a strong and unknown resistance from the nomads who refused to be ruled by the Empire. Abbas the Great then implemented firm strategies. "In all parts of the mainland where the sun shines, everyone must respect the imperial law and authority! The obedient ones will be rewarded while the rebellious ones will be mercilessly punished." Finally, the marshal of the Empire massacred 60,000 foreign troops and captured their leader, Halifax. Abbas the Great then ordered for this foreign leader to be publicly trampled by horses until he died.

At last, the whole continent finally unified and became the Empire's territory. As a result, the Empire in the south and Roland in the north, separated by the straits, were in quite a confrontational setup. Also in that era, the Great Sage Dandong was born. He became Abbas the Great's most powerful assistant as he single handedly planned a series of reforms, giving the Empire a lot of vigor. Also in that palace, Abbas the Great renamed the Empire as the [Radiant Empire](#). The name of the Radiant Empire reverberated through the whole continent.

Twenty-three years ago, the Empire once again went through a historical moment. It was its first defeat and humiliation after a few hundred years. The foreigners from the Northwest Grasslands raised their banners and declared independence. They then formed the Great Moon Kingdom. On top of that, the commander of the

army who was Tulip Family's head died of illness. Eventually, the Empire's Central Cavalry were defeated by the Great Moon Kingdom's armored cavalry. As they were defeated, the Empire had to acknowledge the Great Moon Kingdom's independence. After that, the Empire and the Great Moon Kingdom signed an agreement in the hall constructed by Abbas the Great, agreeing to the division of their lands.

Rody sat in the carriage and occasionally gazed out of the window, looking towards the palace in the distance. He recalled seeing the picture of the palace in history books. He did not know what his fate would be when he arrived there.

Rody stared at the palace which was getting closer. As night drew nearer, he had a peculiar feeling.

This is the heart of the Empire!

The palace was surrounded by about 60 miles of wall, completely constructed with huge rocks. Its height and thickness were about the same as the wall of the Imperial Capital but its strength was much stronger. Standing on the wall were the Imperial Guards wearing golden armors and holding spears. There was also a brightly colored banner with a thorny flower, flapping in the wind. This wall was originally something built in haste during the war. A few hundred years later, an ancient emperor renovated the wall. The original castle-like wall was given a magnificent coating to make it similar to the Imperial Palace. The original iron gate was replaced with a golden gate, the symbol of the Imperial Family's dignity.

As the carriage passed through the gate, Rody could not help but mentally try to calculate as to how many years of a commoner's expenses could be covered by the cost of the gate's platinum gold coating.

Under the guidance of the Imperial Guards, the carriage stopped at the entrance of the inner city of the Imperial Palace. At this

point, Rody had to get off the carriage. Nobody except His Majesty the Emperor was allowed to ride a carriage into the inner city.

Twelve fully armed guards led the way. Rody eventually reached the audience hall. The thick and heavy door made of wood and iron was already open. Following Gordon's instructions, Rody slowly walked into the audience hall alone.

The 16 huge pillars in the audience hall looked dignified. The audience hall was surrounded and illuminated by large candles, made of cattle fat. The illumination was so bright that it seemed as if it was daytime. When Rody stepped onto the floor, it gave out a soft sound. Rody noticed that the floor of the audience hall was made out of gold. On both sides of the audience hall, rows of guards in armor stood. They only revealed their eyes and they had axes in their hands. They looked straight in front and did not glance at Rody.

"Hmph,... gold. The Imperial Palace is really like what the legend said... like a cage." Rody could not help but think to himself.

Gordon pointed to the door at the end of the hall and whispered, "His Majesty is in there waiting for you." He hesitated for a moment before saying again, "Young Master Seth, please give me your sword."

Rody knew he could not refuse. He gave the lightsaber to Gordon. Gordon nodded his head and passed on the sword to one of the guards at the door before walking with Rody towards the back.

The two guards, at the side of the entrance, carefully interrogated Gordon. Only when Gordon produced the command plate did they allow Rody to enter.

The door slowly opened and Rody immediately felt a chill.

It was a side hall, which was actually the real center of the Empire. It was noted in the Empire's history, that all the important policies and strategies were agreed and fixed here by the emperor

and his ministers.

The inside of the hall was mostly empty. He felt a strange sense of relief from the ceiling that gave off a gentle and chilling light. Rody knew that this was an illuminating spell. There were no decorations or furnishings in the middle of the room. There was only a huge and long table in the wide, open hall. At the end of the table, there was a long and thin silhouette.

He wore a long white robe and had long black hair tied up behind his head. His face looked abnormally fair as if it was devoid of color. He carefully looked at Rody with eyes which looked like two bright gems. Although the person was just quietly standing there, Rody could feel a tremendous kind of invisible pressure.

Rody immediately bowed his head and knelt down. He spoke loudly, "I am Tulip Family's Seth Rudolph. I present myself to His Majesty the Emperor!"

The white robed person in the distance seemed motionless. He gently nodded but he did seem to have intention of allowing Rody to stand up.

The current Radiant Empire Emperor quietly looked at Rody. His gaze was as if he could see through Rody. Rody did not know how long he had knelt. He could feel the cold sweat flowing down his back. After a while, he heard a clear and resounding voice.

"Seth! I have a difficult problem. I hope you can solve it for me!"

The original name, guāngmíng dìguó meant Light Empire or Bright Empire but it sounds awkward as the name of a kingdom so I picked Radiant instead.

Chapter 51: Entrusted Important Task

Rody slowly raised his head and felt the other party's sharp gaze. He did not know why but that gaze made his hair stand.

“Seth, come here!”

Rody swallowed his saliva and slowly stood up. He then walked a few steps forward.

The person in front of him was the Empire's emperor, Abbas XI! In his heart, Rody felt unimpressed.

Why does he not look very spirited?

Based on Rody's perception, the emperor as a descendant of Abbas the Great should be wearing golden armor. The emperor should be stalwart and give off a majestic impression. However, the middle-aged man in front of him looked pale and his thin body was hidden under the white robe. He gave people a deep, eerie impression.

Hmph! Looks like being an emperor is not necessarily a joyous affair. Look at his appearance, his forehead is full of wrinkles. He must be frowning constantly.

Rody stood in front of the emperor, about ten steps away. He did not dare to go any nearer.

Abbas XI finally looked away and lightly sighed.

“Seth, how long has it been since I last saw you? Hmm... It should be a good few years? It was when your father passed away. At that time you were still a child,” Abbas XI spoke in a somewhat sad tone.

Rody kept his mouth shut and lowered his head.

“In just a few years, you have become robust. Much better than your father during those years,” Abbas XI spoke as he walked slowly towards Rody. He extended his hand to pat Rody's shoulder

and said, “I know your sense of unease. Today’s incident has already been reported to me.”

Rody thought for a moment and was finding the right words to say when the emperor stopped him with a gesture.

“I know what you want to say. Bayan already told me about it. However, I know that his stories were filled with exaggerations. Hmph, I am not old and confused yet but this incident actually happened. You actually injured the guy so, you must also understand the consequences.”

Rody nodded. Nicole reminded him earlier not to say too much. The more he said the more mistakes he could make.

Abbas XI looked at Rody’s eyes with some interest. He gave a cold smile and slowly asked, “Why do you not speak? I heard that your temperament is not like this. You are well known as an extremely audacious person.

Rody took a deep breath and slowly raised his head. He looked directly at the emperor’s eyes and solemnly said, “Your Majesty, I do not know what to say. For Your Majesty to summon me, there must already be a decision.”

Abbas XI looked surprised momentarily before he slightly frowned and pondered. He asked slowly, “Do you know about the war between the Empire and the Great Moon Kingdom?”

Rody thought to himself. Although the news of the fight had been concealed, it could not have been concealed from those in the upper strata. Otherwise, Nicole would not have found out about it. For His Majesty to ask Rody this question, it would mean that he was aware of Rody’s knowledge about the situation. That would mean that it was useless for him to pretend. As a result, it would be better for him to gracefully acknowledge by nodding his head.

“Very good,” Abbas XI nodded his head. “You are pretty smart to know that you cannot lie to me,” his tone was awe-inspiring. Soon,

he changed his tone and asked again, “As the heir of the Tulip Family, what do you think of the Imperial Army in this case?”

Rody thought for a moment and loudly proclaimed, “The Tulip Family is willing to go to war and risk their lives to defend the dignity of the Empire!”

Those words were also taught to him by Nicole. Whatever it was, those words would definitely not offend His Majesty.

Sure enough, a trace of satisfactory smile appeared on Abbas XI’s pale face. “Unfortunately, you are still young and have not inherited the title. Otherwise, I really hope you can be of service to me. I also hope that the unbeatable history of the Tulip family would continue through you! Great Moon Kingdom, hmph! Merely a group of uncivilized foreign barbarians!” His Majesty exposed his resentment from his last few words.

Rody sneered in his heart.

Barbarians? A group of barbarians fought to the extent that your personally appointed commander of the Northwest Legion was so badly defeated?

Of course, Rody did not say those words out loud. He swallowed his saliva and silently said, “Your Majesty is brilliant!” Rody kept his criticisms to himself.

Abbas XI also sighed as if he was aware of his own outburst. He lowered his voice and spoke, “The Empire has just been defeated and the morale is low. I summoned you here so that you can help me with one thing.”

Rody immediately remembered Nicole’s words and hurriedly proclaim his boundless loyalty. He knelt with one knee and earnestly looked at His Majesty in a 45° angle while cursing in his heart.

This preposterous Empire’s family heir is really stifling!

Abbas XI stared at Rody seeming satisfied and spoke, “I have

decided to bring forward your succession ceremony. Three days from now, I will personally host your succession ceremony. If you can pass the Imperial Examination, I will officially announce your inheritance of the Tulip Family's title and you will become the new Duke Rudolph. After that, I will have a more important mission for you!"

Rody did not say anything but he gave the Emperor a dignified look. He knew that at this moment, he must definitely not show a surprised face.

As expected, Abbas XI nodded when he saw Rody maintaining his calm and loudly proclaimed, "If you successfully inherit the title, I will appoint you as the Northwest Inspection Special Envoy and I will order you to immediately go to the Northwest Region to aid General Ruben of the Northwest Legion to take charge of military affairs."

"Ah?" Even though Rody tried to maintain his calm, when he heard those words, he was unable to conceal it.

Go to the front lines? Northwest Inspection Special Envoy? That is the title of the Imperial Envoy.

Although Rody had never been a government official, he had been to the Imperial Academy and knew the meaning of being a special envoy.

It meant that at exceptional moments, he would have full control of military affairs in the Northwest Region. During critical moments, he could even overwrite the orders of the original First Commander of the Northwest Legion.

Abbas XI sighed.

"I know that you are still too young and you should not bear this burden. However, this is now a difficult time for the Empire. The Tulip Family is the 'God of War' and flagship of the Empire. Now is the time where the Empire needs the Tulip Family the most." The

emperor's dignified gaze soften and his voice also lowered, "Even though I want you to go to the Northwest, I do not really expect you to change the situation immediately. After all, you are still young and do not have much experience. What I need are your banners! When the soldiers are defeated, I want your family banner to come up and stabilize the morale of the army. Seth, I do not need you to do too many things! I just need you to go to the front lines! As long as your family banner is up, the morale of the soldiers will be secured. Do you understand my intentions?"

"I understand!" Rody breathed a sigh of relief.

He was not afraid of fighting on the front lines. As a warrior, he had already plan to join the military and become a soldier. Nonetheless, at his tender age, he was inevitably apprehensive to be suddenly entrusted with an important task. However, the emperor was clear in his commands and did not expect him to actually command the army. He just wanted Rody to go out and show himself to the soldiers. The fact was, utilizing the legend of the undefeated Tulip Family was a good tactic to sustain the morale of the army.

When Abbas XI saw Rody's nervousness, he smiled and said, "I believe that the Tulip Family would not disappoint me. That is why I hope that you can live up to my expectations."

Rody took a deep breath, slowly knelt down and said, "Yes."

Since all was said and done, the emperor nodded indicating that Rody could now leave. Rody slowly stood up and showed his respect before leaving.

When he reached the entrance, the emperor suddenly spoke again.

"Seth, I heard that you got close with Jojo recently... I hope that you will not be distracted by anything else at this time."

Rody turned stiff as he secretly scoffed. He slowly turned and

said. "I understand."

Hmph! To fight with the emperor for a woman. I do not have such interests!

When he left the audience hall, Rody first looked for Gordon to take the light saber back. After that, he got on the carriage without a word.

When Rody got home, Nicole was surprised that he returned so early. By the time Rody related about his meeting with the Emperor, Nicole's face was full of solemn expression.

"His Majesty did not blame you?"

Rody sighed. "I also felt strange. His Majesty lightly spoke about it before changing the subject."

Nicole's facial expression became even more somber. After a while, she gently asked, "Are you confident about the examination in three days' time?"

Rody nodded. "There should be no problem."

"But.... But now the situation at the Northwest is tense. His Majesty wants to send you to the front lines." Nicole looked sad.

Rody felt his heart warm up and he could not help but move forward to hold Nicole's hands. "Nicole, are you worried about me?"

Nicole's face turned red and she quickly withdrew her hands. She stepped back and looked to the side. Fortunately, there were no other servants at that moment. Those around them had already been sent away as well.

When Rody saw Nicole pull back, he smiled sadly and said, "Nicole, I am sorry."

Nicole knew Rody was unhappy. Knowing that he was about to leave for the front lines in a few days, her heart turned tender. She spoke gently; her eyes red, "Rody, I beg of you. Please do not force

me. Right now, our identities are different....”

Rody showed an expression of self-deprecation and sighed. He gave Nicole a glance before leaving.

“Wait!” Nicole hurriedly said as she felt anxious. She rushed in front and held Rody’s clothes. Then she said, “Rody! Do not misunderstand! I... I mean... right now you are acting as my little brother! Wait... Wait until after everything is over, I will arrange for you to be in the army. As long as you work hard... in future... in future, I will wait for you.” The last few words were very soft but luckily, Rody had good hearing as a warrior. Otherwise, those words would not be heard.

Rody felt surprised and stared at Nicole. His face was filled with joy. “Really? Nicole... are you speaking the truth? Really?”

Nicole’s face turned red and she said, “You.... what do you want me to do? You were rude... twice already... Who do you think you are?” She spoke until she looked like she was about to cry.

Rody felt so happy that he grabbed Nicole’s hands. This time he would not let go no matter what was said. “So, you... you do not mind my real identity? I am just a civilian....”

Nicole was displeased. “Who do you think we, the Tulip Family are? Do you think that I, Nicole, am that kind of...that kind of person?”

At that moment, hundreds of flowers bloomed in Rody’s heart. His past depression from the past few days was immediately swept away. He no longer cared about the emperor’s commands or titles or examinations. He did not even care about being on the front lines. Even if he had to risk his life fighting the foreign barbarians right now, he would not frown.

“Nicole, do not worry! I will work hard! I will become successful and not disgrace the name of your Tulip Family!” Rody shouted in excitement.

“Shut up!” Nicole’s face was still red but she quickly stomped in front and covered Rody's mouth. “You need to shut up! Do you know where you are? Do not shout!”

Rody immediately shut up but excitedly reached out his hands to hold Nicole. Nicole’s face turned red. She quickly avoided his grasp and in a panic, opened the door before running out.

Unexpectedly, Rody watched Nicole escape. He felt that his bitterness for so many days was now worth it. He was so excited that he felt like roaring.

“You are a real idiot!” Suddenly, a sarcastic sounding voice could be heard.

“Andy, shut up!” Rody was so happy that he did not want to bicker with Andy.

“Hmph! I said, you are an idiot!” Andy’s voice was cold. “The man being an idiot is bad enough. The woman, who was originally clever, has also become an idiot after falling in love! The preposterous emperor just told you to go and court death. It is such an obvious plot to get you killed by others yet you two fools are still so well behaved. I think that at this moment, the emperor is the one who is really happy. Looks like soon, there will be a fireworks display at the palace!! Idiot!!”

Chapter 52: Night Exploration of the White Tower

“Boy, how much have you been studying these past few days? How much of the famous historical Art of War have you learned? Don't tell me all the knowledge has been fed to the dogs? Did the little girl not tell you about the war in the Northwest? Don't you know how to think using your brain?”

“Let me ask you, if you were the commander of the Great Moon Kingdom who just defeated the Empire's Army of 200,000 in one swoop, you have now occupied the Northwest and you are aware of the Empire's lack of military strength as well as its inability to mobilize more soldiers in a short time, what would you do? The entire Northwest Region is now vulnerable to the Great Moon Kingdom! They have assembled 80,000 cavalries at a strategic location in the Northwest, Oldenburg. Why would they assemble so many cavalries there? Don't tell me they went there for their horses to graze? To the Great Moon Kingdom, the rest of the Northwest Territory is undefended. Don't tell me they will not be tempted to attack?

“The Northwest Legion is already finished! The fact that it was not completely destroyed is already a miracle from God! Just now in the audience hall, did the emperor say he wanted to send more reinforcements? Did he say he wanted to dispatch more soldiers? Idiot!”

Rody's face immediately changed and he could not help but frown. “Perhaps the emperor would send reinforcements... After all, Northwest is also part of the Empire...”

“Aah!” Andy's tone of voice sounded as if he was sneering. “Dispatch troops? If the Empire could do that, why would the emperor need to receive an emissary from the Great Moon Kingdom? It is not that the Empire will not send reinforcements, it

is that they have no soldiers to send as reinforcements! How long would it take to mobilize troops from the North? How long would it take to assemble willing participants? Even if the emperor is resolute enough to take the risk and fight against the cavalry, how many days would it take to send out troops from the Imperial Capital?”

Rody immediately closed his mouth. His mind was churning at high speed with calculated thoughts.

Not dispatching any troops? Then there could only be one explanation! The emperor received the envoy to delay the attack! But because the envoy was attacked, it would seem that peace is no longer an option... Or rather, the Great Moon Kingdom had never really wanted peace. The envoy was just sent over to deceive the public. Otherwise, what is the point of assembling more soldiers? For a military parade?

Since war is inevitable, or rather since defeat in the war is inevitable, then there must be a malicious intent in dispatching me...

Who were the people the emperor hated the most in the Empire? Rody finally understood that the emperor hated the Tulip Family who had earned high merits for protecting the lord. The emperor would be very willing to take this opportunity to shoot down the Tulip Family's foundation!

After dispatching him to the Northwest, it would no longer be a matter of whether the Northwest Legion could withstand the Great Moon Kingdom's cavalry. They would most likely be defeated and Rody would be killed in the process. Even if Rody somehow manages to escape, the Tulip Family's record of being undefeated would be tarnished and they would lose the respect they once had. It was the perfect solution to the internal threat for His Majesty the Emperor!

Rody started to sweat and whispered, “But... the emperor would

not sacrifice the lives of thousands of soldiers in the Northwest Legion to achieve this goal right? That price is too big!”

Andy’s voice turned unfeeling and grim. “You are too young! Since when was there never a bloody river in a fight for imperial power? As long as he gets to keep his power, why would he care about the lives of tens of thousands of people? Even if the Emperor does not have the courage to sacrifice the Northwest Legion, the Northwest Legion only just needs to be defeated and escape. Then his objective would already be achieved! Although, to the people in the Empire you are just a special envoy meant for show, other people out there would not see it that way. The world would think that the Tulip Family is the real commander! The defeat of the Northwest Legion would be the fault of the Tulip Family! If I was the emperor, I would also accuse you of not accomplishing the mission as His Majesty’s special envoy, and execute you. Others would also have nothing to say!”

These words made Rody’s heart pound wildly.

Rody thought to himself and did not discuss this with Nicole. With a bitter feeling and knowing that he was actually not a particularly resourceful person, how could he find a solution in such a short amount of time?

After a long time, Andy’s voice sounded out again, “Boy, as long as you promise me one thing, I will help you to solve this problem!”

“What?” Rody’s heart stirred. Although he was originally an honest person, these past few days Rody had been influenced and now had the ability to scheme. Now that this skeleton has woken him up, come to think of it, he must have a solution already.

“Tonight! It must be tonight! You must sneak into the White Tower. Go to that wall you saw this morning, break it down and go in to look around,” Andy’s voice was soft but resolute.

“Fine!” Rody, without thinking immediately agreed because he

had no choice. The behavior of the mysterious skeleton could not be comprehended. It was also unknown as to how many secrets the skeleton possessed. Since it was able to wake him up, it must have a solution.

Rody patiently waited until evening. Nicole did not visit him as she was shy but she ordered Angel to serve Rody dinner.

Late that night when the moon reached its peak, Rody quietly got up from his bed. He quietly put on his warrior's clothes. He hesitated for a moment before he took the silver mask that Nicole gave him. He had used it before. He then took the light saber before he quietly left through the window.

In fact, he was not clever at leaving without being noticed. Several guards actually saw him. However, the original Young Master Seth also used to slip out in the middle of the night. The guards who recognized Rody's figure kept their calm. They allowed him to get past without stopping him. They just thought to themselves that the young master was finally reverting to his old self after so many days.

Rody knew the way to the academy. The streets were devoid of pedestrians at that hour. He only needed to avoid the night patrols. Without any trouble, he ran towards to the academy and this took him quite a long while.

He silently climbed over the walls of the academy. Thankfully, the Imperial Academy was not a heavily guarded place. Without anybody noticing him in the dark, Rody dashed discreetly towards the White Tower while concealing himself behind the trees.

The bottom floor of the White Tower was a prototype foundation. The large gate was open and there were no guards, probably because it was also the home of the famous magician Elder Glen. It was just that Andy needed to constantly warn Rody.

"Do not step on the sixth step! There is a spell trap! Do not touch the handrails on the staircase! Also... be careful not to step on that

pattern on the floor! That is a magician's cloth spell!

With the guidance of the skeleton, Rody quietly arrived at the wall he saw during the day. Once again, he stood in front of that wall. Rody was sweating and felt relieved. He ran all the way here and was lucky enough not to be spotted. He was already feeling extremely nervous. He had never tried being a thief before!

Rody pushed the wall gently with his hands. He strained his ears and listened to determine that there was nobody near him. He then gently knocked on the wall.

"Use your sword!" Andy's voice advised Rody.

"It is like what you did during the day when you attacked and defeated that barbarian. Concentrate all your power, bit by bit into the sword. After that... do you see the jewel on the hilt? Use your strength and pinch those jewels! Use your strength bit by bit, don't be too nervous," Andy's voice also sounded nervous but like before he never neglected to talk nonsense. "Pity that foreign prince. He thought you were using fighting energy... How could such an elementary thing be compared to your current strength? Even though fundamentally you are like trash however, your body has already received the 'real power' from Old Man Autumn. Although it was only a small amount, after many days of training the power has automatically built up. Ah... it is better than that trash earlier..."

"Shut up, Andy!" Rody felt his head ache listening to him and was unable to concentrate. He could not help but scold him.

Rody then concentrated on being vigilant and mimicked what he did with his sword the previous two times. Little by little, he concentrated the warmth of his hands as he held the sword. And then, slowly using his strength....

Suddenly, there were brilliant enchanting lights bursting out of the jewel at the hilt of the sword which immediately dimmed. After that, the body of the sword also radiated a strange, gentle

light while the edge of the sword emitted a pale golden light.

“Uh?” Rody was a bit surprised but he could not help but snort lightly.

“Idiot! Act quickly. Use the sword to slash! Slash lightly!” Andy’s voice urged.

Rody grit his teeth and ruthlessly slashed the sword into the wall... “Shih,” it made a soft sound. The seemingly fragile scrape enabled the lightsaber to pierce through the wall easily as if it was extremely thin!

Rody stared at the sword in his hands with eyes wide open and was too surprised to speak.

“Quickly!” Andy scowled. “Don’t be in a daze! You are too weak and the sword will not last long!”

Rody restrained his thoughts and slowly moved the sword. He cut a big square shaped pattern in the wall. To his horror, the solid hard wall under the lightsaber was softer than the bread he ate at home! A big section was easily cut out by Rody, creating an entrance big enough for one person to squeeze in.

Rody pulled out the lightsaber and carefully inspected it for damages. He was pleasantly surprised and carefully kept it. After that, he moved the piece of rock he just cut away.

It was really empty behind the walls! However, it was so dark inside that he could not see anything clearly. On top of that, a smell of decay emerged from that hole.

Rody gnashed his teeth and searched his own body. He then took out an illumination gem and gently threw it out. The gem rolled on the ground and gave out light, making the empty space less obscure.

Two mice in the corner were frightened and ran away. With one big stride Rody entered. He turned around and carefully placed the brick back on the wall. This was so that if anyone should come,

they would not be aware that the rock was moved without looking carefully.

Rody looked around the place with that faint light and frowned.
“Where is this place?”

Chapter 53: Relic from 200 Years Ago

Although his nose was filled with the smell of decay, Rody was no longer bothered by it anymore. This place was not large. It was like what Andy said. It was a small study. In the corner was a huge bookcase but the books on it were covered in thick dust and its true features could not be seen. There was also a small and strange shaped table. It was not like the tables that Rody had normally seen. On top, there were some hidden compartments. The wood of the chairs in front of the table were all decayed, the chairs looked shaky and seemed like they would fall apart at anytime.

The thing that attracted Roy most was the pitch dark wooden box placed on the table.

He went to the table and picked up the wooden box. He wiped the dust off the wooden box with his sleeve and immediately saw a line of words that were carved out with a knife. Unfortunately, those words seemed to be in what Rody and the Tulip Family recognized as ‘God’s Language’. Nobody could actually understand it.

“Open it!” Andy sounded excited.

Rody forced open the cover to find a small book in the box. As the book was old, it looked a bit yellow and the words were a bit blurred.

“Dandong’s Diary”

Four big and clear characters were on the first page. Even though his own handwriting was a bit crooked, it was obvious that the Great Sage had terrible handwriting. Thankfully, it was written in the Empire’s common text.

Rody turned to the next page to see the large and small writing. It made him feel relieved to know that these were written in the Empire’s common text.

Rody was so curious that he did not care how dirty the floor was.

He sat down and began to read the notes of the mighty Sage of the Empire.

“I want to go home! I really want to go home!”

Dandong's first sentence was written in very big letters. The scribbles were extremely messy. Obviously he felt very agitated when he wrote this.

“It has been a month since I arrived here but I have not found my way home. My aircraft is damaged but I cannot find any fuel or repair tools here! My God! This place is like Europe in the Middle Ages! It is ancient! What should I do?”

A series of strange terms made Rody confused. He did not understand what the sage was talking about and could only continue to read.

“My timer is broken. I cannot tell what the exact time is now! However, it should be around New Year's on Earth. I do not think I will make it back. This place is not Earth and I do not understand their language. Shit! I am a genius, proficient in five languages!”

“I have finished eating all the food and I will need to leave this cave soon. Recently, there were more and more people here and I managed to learn a bit of the local language of the mountain people. I also heard that there is a war coming and that they are all fleeing. How unlucky! How did I get into such a situation? What if I die? My girlfriend is still young... Shit! Not sure who will benefit....”

When he read the last sentence, Rody laughed. Although he could not understand most of what he wrote, he understood from the Great Sage's last few words that the Great Sage was also a normal mortal.

“This morning, I encountered a cavalry.... God! This place still has cavalries! Fortunately, I still have my laser gun. Every minute, there was a man on his horse with a dozen of horses following him.

That felt great. However, when I went through a town, I was stopped by some soldiers and was treated as a spy. Shit! I kept shooting and dealt with them!”

“Today, there were a lot of problems.... I had to trade away some of my clothing. My laser gun is also almost out of energy. Fortunately, there is still a bit of money. The currency here is a bit strange and is made out of metal.”

Having read up to this stage, Rody felt dizzy. He faintly understood that Dandong came to the Empire from someplace else as he did not seem familiar with the environment of the Empire. However, Rody was not able to find out where Dandong actually came from.

After Rody randomly flipped through a few pages, he was attracted by a message.

“Today, again I won another bet with the general. How pitiful. I am a professor that knows a lot about astronomy! I could tell what kind of wind will blow from last night’s weather. This general lost his bet, but it seems that I am the one who was duped. This is because he listened to me when I said that today would be windy and used this knowledge to employ a fire attack to burn enemy warships. To think that he was making use of me! I have been captured by him for about a month. He seemed curious about me and did not kill me. It seems that I am safe for the moment. However, he started to look worried recently. Apparently, we are surrounded by the enemy....Shit! Does that mean I am doomed? No way! I better sneak away!”

“He did not kill me! He even secretly came to me and told me that if I wanted to go, he would set me free tonight! He even cried hypocritically. Shit! Did he think such a small trick could move me? My ancestors were famous liars! In this world, only I am able to deceive others. Nobody can deceive me! However, if I were to die in this place it would be too embarrassing! I have decided to go!”

“Sigh, I am too softhearted. Actually, I already ran out but I kept thinking whether the man would die or not. This man actually treated me well. He did not make me wash his smelly socks like the other prisoners. Ugh, fine. I will help him.... Is this guy actually a man? When he saw me come back, he cried uncontrollably. Shit! Is his inclination that way? I need to pay more attention...”

“Backwards! Truly backwards! The army here only knows how to use their swords, charge forward and slash aimlessly? The range for using the bows and arrows was also too near. No way! This looks like the time for me to show off my skills. Today, I will design for them a catapult! Sigh, I had no choice. Even though I am brilliant, with the materials given to me in this place, do you think I could build a laser cannon? Shit!”

“Today, I opened my eyes! My God! Is this legendary magic? Shit! Relying on my catapult, the enemy became disorderly and a few people suddenly flew up into the sky.... It was a real flight! They did not use any form of aircraft! The ones who flew then shot fireballs at my catapult and destroyed it!... Shit! These guys are more powerful than a helicopter!”

“Haha! Those flying enemies... No! Rudolph said that those were enemy magicians. Whoever they were, they made me feel bitter. Hmph! In my place, tactics for fighting flying things from the ground have been studied for a few hundred years! The weapons used have also been improved for 17 or 18 generations! Killing these guys would be a small matter. There are no anti air missiles here, so I modified the bows and arrows to shoot down those few flying guys like a hornet’s nest.”

Rody turned the book page by page. He read with fascination. Although he could not understand most of the things said by the Great Sage, there were so many fascinating things that he could finish reading all of it. Especially getting to read about the famous war between the Empire and the continent of Northern Roland. The secret of this war was something that he absolutely could not

find in history books.

“Today, I taught Rudolph how to use a water stratagem. Go up the river and build a dam. Let the water levels rise before letting the water flow freely. The water will then wash away all the enemy warships. These guys are really stupid. They can’t think of such a simple plan? In my country, even the novels wrote about this kind of stratagem. The war of the cold weapons was fought on Earth for many thousands of years... Unfortunately, I do not know much. Otherwise, I would have brought the Romance of the Three Kingdoms book or Sun Tzu’s Art of War book which would be good.”

“Rudolph told me that we were ready to move on as we had already repelled the Northern Roland continent. After that, we could return to the Imperial Capital. The Imperial Capital, sigh. This meant that there is still an emperor in this place. Where I am from, the word ‘emperor’ is only a historical term....”

Rody gave a long sigh. Although he knew that the Imperial Army won that war, it was more exciting to learn what happened behind the scenes from Dandong’s notes.

“I finally understood why there was war! Bloody hell! The two continents are actually so close to each other. It was just separated by a strait. Both emperors also want to conquer the world. How fascinating. However, since Rudolph has treated me so well. I might as well help his emperor...”

The following records described the events where Dandong and Rudolph, the Tulip Family’s Duke were having an audience with the Empire’s greatest emperor, Abbas the Great. Those records were very profound and had a lot of things that Rody could not understand. This included what happened when Dandong received appreciation from Abbas the Great. There were talks about the governing of the nation. Rody could not understand more than half of it especially when it was filled with terms like ‘economics’ and ‘inflation’. It made Rody’s head swell.

What Rody noticed was that the Great Sage Dandong was extremely interested in magic. He differentiated magic and sorcery with a series of studies. He created a lot of new spells that made magic differentiate itself from sorcery and caused both factions to reach a stalemate.

“What is magic and sorcery? They are just ways to control energy. Magic is the act of gathering energy into one’s own body while sorcery pays attention to the technique of controlling it. In other words, sorcerers may not have much energy but using some complicated technique, they could somehow be more power... How do you say this... Magic is like weightlifting. The stronger the body, the more energy could be used to carry heavier things. On the other hand, sorcery is similar to tools. A person does not need to be powerful but if he had a gun, he could defeat people stronger than himself. How interesting... Is it an energy problem? Where I am from, this problem has already been solved... Essentially, what is the difference between a lightning or fire spell and a laser gun? Hmm.”

Rody’s heart stirred as he thought about his lightsaber. He believed that the reason the lightsaber was so sharp had something to do with him concentrating his strength on the sword. However, what really made the sword become so sharp must be because of the strange gem at the hilt and something Dandong called ‘conversion’.

Suddenly, Rody was attracted by a statement found in the diary.

“God... The people in this world said that there is a God... but does God really exist? Their sorcery and magic in our world are supernatural things. In that case, what is God?”

Chapter 54: Sunflower Treasure

What is God? Does God exist?

Thinking of it, Dandong could later create a living skeleton and an independent space out of nothing! These abilities were already almost God-like!

Rody felt agitated about Dandong's words but when he flipped to the next page, he found that Dandong did not continue on this topic.

Rody who was anxious to know Dandong's comments about God, flipped through many pages but he did not mention the word God anymore in the later pages. He did not even record the skeleton, Andy and that space in his diary.

Suddenly, a line of text caught Rody's attention.

“ ‘God's Smile’ is just a hoax. According to my research, it is only a variant of fantastic and amazing sorcery. The Elven Race's mysterious magic is just simple magic with major improvements. Wearing this mask can definitely change a person's appearance but its real use was to receive the elements of sorcery. It is merely a small trick but a few hundred years ago, the legends mentioned it as something outrageous.”

“According to the legends, the Elven Race had magical talent from birth. Unfortunately, their species was already extinct and I could not find an entity to study. However, I suspect that what they consider an innate magical talent was the result of the brains of this race developing differently compared to humans. They could also have the benefit of being able to sense the energy which the locals call the magic elements. Alas, the studies have shown that sorcery and magic are just energy with different names. The brilliant Elven Elder who made ‘God's Smile’ during those years, must have had the same opinion as me. When he made this mask during those years, it was to reduce the limitations of the

interaction between magical... no, interaction between the energies. Unfortunately, that elder was skilled in conjuration. That is why the created mask only made conjuring more powerful.”

“Today... I found out that this mask has a spell to see through objects. How interesting. If I could return to my world and bring this mask, wouldn't I have X-ray vision? It would be great to walk down the street looking at beautiful woman with this mask.... Sigh, I am thinking too crookedly.... See-through spell or X-ray effect, in the end, it is still a kind of energy. Ah, how boring. I studied for a lifetime and found nothing new. It seems that I really cannot go back home.”

Rody felt his heart beat like thunder. He took a deep a breath and looked down. He only hoped to see if Dandong wrote anything about how to use this mask.

Perhaps at that moment, this so called ‘God’ really blessed him because Dandong really made a detailed record on the various methods of how to use this mask. However, Rody felt frustrated after reading it.

This is because according to Dandong, ‘God’s Smile’ is a tool of sorcery. To use it, he must have a certain level of ability in sorcery. Also, it could only be used by a sorcerer of Grade 4 or higher. Rody definitely could not do this alone. Even if he searched the whole Empire, he probably could not even find 10 sorcerers that were at least Grade 4. That was because the Radiant Empire was a kingdom of magicians. There were a lot of Grade 4 magicians but not many Grade 4 sorcerers.

Rody read the back of the book. There were too many things but most of it were very profound and difficult to read. Therefore, he skipped to the back.

When he turned to the last page, a few fine words caught his attention.

“I originally wanted to burn this as it contains too many things

that do not belong in this world. However, I spent a lifetime writing all of these things down and felt like it would be a pity to burn it. Might as well leave it for the future generations. When I was young, I read stories of rookie warriors finding books containing the secret skills of senior heroes and then becoming the strongest. Although this is not a skill book, it is probably as useful as one. I don't care anymore! I will be that senior hero!"

"I have found a way to preserve the life but it does not interest me. I have had enough of this world. The past few decades, the emperor has provided me with money, women and entertainment to the extent that I got bored of them all. It's probably better to be dead. Although Rudolph treated me kindly, the demise of his family in the future is inevitable. Even if I want to do something about it, it is not within my control. Either way, leaving behind a person to become this family's bodyguard is already considering him as a brother. Sigh... I do not care anymore!"

"Note: The two-months' worth of notes in front, are recorded in our common language. This is to enable the future generation rookies to understand the secrets contained within my notes. I purposely used two days to translate this into the Imperial Language. To the person who obtains this, even though I do not know who you are, I have already done my utmost best. I hope that you are magnanimous! Alas what a pity, this book needs a prestigious name. All those novels also had resounding names for their secret books... Nine Yin Scriptures? Falling Dragon's Eighteen Palms? Ying Yang of Great Compassion? Aha! Found it! [Let's call it Sunflower Treasure!](#)"

"Person of the future generation! This book is known as the Sunflower Treasure! If you get a hold of this book, you must practice the teachings here then, you would be invincible! Haha... how do you say that in a line... Sunflower in My Hand, Country in My Possession.... Haha, I'm leaving now!"

Rody felt confused. He found that the 200 year old Great Sage

Dandong's words were difficult to understand. He could only understand four to five sentences out of every ten sentences he read. As for the Sunflower Treasure, he simply could not understand it from the beginning.

Rody exhaled and put the book back into the wooden box. He gently stroke the box with his hand. Thinking of it now, the words engraved on the wooden box which he could not understand, must be "Sunflower Treasure". Those words were written in a flamboyant cursive style with a ancient slant to it, except that he did not recognize a single word.

Rody earnestly held the box, knelt and vowed, "Master Dandong, I, Rody am a useless child. However, I will learn to use the Sunflower Treasure you left behind and not bring disgrace to it."

Rody spoke righteously, wondering whether Dandong would laugh if he ever found out in the netherworld.

Suddenly, he heard Andy's voice, "Idiot! Quickly! You are so slow that the sun is already rising. Quickly go!" Rody immediately stood up and left the room through the hole. He did not forget to cover the entrance back up with the rock. There were not many people who went there on normal days and even if they did, they would unlikely notice.

Taking advantage of the dark, Rody quietly left the White Tower. He carefully climbed over the wall and left the academy and then returned to the Tulip Family's mansion while avoiding patrols and pedestrians.

Early the next morning, His Majesty the Emperor sent someone to officially announce that in three days, it would be the examination for the Tulip Family's heir. His Majesty would personally host the examination.

Nicole did not dare to slack off. Although she knew about Rody's strength, she stepped up his training for the next three days. Instructor Carter also anxiously used all of his abilities to proudly

teach Rody swordsmanship. If Rody passed the examination, he would become Tulip Family's next generation duke. Then, he would be master of the Tulip Family's dukes!

Rody trained every day for the past few days and he hid under the quilt to read the Sunflower Treasure at night. When he came across something he did not understand, he asked Andy. Andy did not ignore him and responded immediately each time Rody called for him. However, Andy did not seem to be in a good mood. His words were melancholic but were not sarcastic like usual.

Kuíhuā bǎodiǎn basically means Sunflower Treasured Book or Big Flower Treasured Book. I went with Sunflower Treasure because it still sounds right and also sounds cooler. Although he could not understand it, he suspected that the words carved onto the box were "Sunflower Treasure". He just felt that he could not understand a word of that imposing and primitive carving.

Chapter 55: Horseback Archery Examination

Three days had passed. During the days before the inheritance ceremony, Rody could not sleep. After all, he was just a boy. Although he had experienced a lot of strange things and no longer had a normal outlook in life, when he had to encounter such a big event, he would still feel nervous.

Nicole was in Rody's room for a long while and accompanied the servant Angel to dress Rody up. Nicole carefully selected a silver colored piece of warrior clothing which was specially ordered. The clothing was tailor made by one of the most famous tailors in the Imperial Capital. It fit very well and exposed Rody's robust body, making him look heroic.

The two of them stared at each other from time to time and turned red in the face. When Rody was completely dressed up, Nicole carefully looked at Rody's ears to make sure that there were no flaws.

Rody remembered his ears and felt disappointed. He could not help but ask, "Nicole, when are you going to remove these ears?"

Nicole no longer dared to keep it a secret and smiled. "I am trying to find a way but Dandong's notes are too difficult to understand. When this is over, we will slowly study it."

Rody opened his mouth and wanted to tell Nicole that he had already found the method to use it but could not because he was not a sorcerer. He thought that Nicole would be able to control the mask as she was an extraordinary sorcerer. However, when the words reached his mouth, he remembered Andy telling him not to let anyone know about the last words of Dandong. Rody immediately gave up. Before leaving, Nicole gave Rody some advice.

Rody looked at Nicole in close proximity and his heart beat faster. Uncontrollably, he bent forward to kiss her cheek. Nicole was shocked and immediately dodged to escape. She showed a strange begging expression and said softly, “Rody, don’t be like this. Wait for next time.... alright? Your appearance right now....I really cannot. When I look at your face, I think of my brother....”

Rody sighed and did not dare to show how upset he was. He could only follow Nicole and board the carriage.

Fortunately, the carriage was not just occupied by Rody and Nicole. Instructor Carter, who was wearing an officer’s uniform was also sitting inside the carriage. Nicole had already declared Instructor Carter as Seth’s official instructor. Following the tradition of the Empire, when a noble inherits the title, the instructor would also receive a commendation from the emperor. That was why Carter was wearing formal clothes and he even meticulously combed his beard. As a show of respect to the instructor, Nicole did not let him ride on the horse but invited him to sit together with them in the carriage.

One side of the palace hall had already been decorated. According to tradition, all the Royal Guards were wearing distinctive suits of armor they stood respectfully around the hall. The hall also had a lot of young nobles who had been waiting for quite a while.

In accordance to the tradition of the Empire, the inheritance ceremony was held several times a year. Every time, there would be a lot of nobles taking the assessment. However, since this examination was an impromptu decision by His Majesty, there were fewer candidates in comparison to that of the regular assessments. Some of the young nobles looked at Rody resentfully. They knew that the heir of the Tulip Family was the reason that His Majesty moved the date of the assessment forward.

Rody did not care about them so much and followed Nicole into the audience hall with his head held high. One of them was an attractive beauty while the other was a handsome guy. When they

entered the audience hall, they immediately attracted countless gazes.

All the young noble participants of the examination were in their best attire. In front of everyone they were putting up their best behavior. Although the Empire had declined since its founding several hundred years ago, they had still retained their martial spirit. All of these young nobles had the title of warrior. Their ranks were all different and no one knew whether they truly deserved their titles.

There were at least 20 tables in the middle of the hall. Without a word, Nicole directly brought Rody to a front table and sat down. She looked indifferent but occasionally had a gentle expression when she looked at Rody. On the other hand, because of his status, Instructor Carter could not enter the hall and had to wait outside.

A few moments later, Gordon appeared from behind and walked in large strides as he shouted, “Radiant Empire’s Mighty Emperor, His Majesty, has arrived!”

All the whispering people silenced themselves, took a deep breath and stood up. In the silence, a large door at the back of the hall opened and Emperor Abbas XI slowly walked out. That day, the emperor did not wear the white robe but a gold colored light armor. On his back was a large red cloak. His face also looked neat and dignified.

Everyone in the hall bowed and knelt down when they saw the emperor. Rody also knelt down but he could not help but freeze for a moment when he saw the person behind the emperor.

It was not just Rody who was dumbfounded but the other nobles were also shocked.

That was because in such a formal ceremony, the person who should be accompanying the emperor was Her Majesty the Queen. However, the woman who was standing at his side was not the queen!

Jojo, who was wearing a brightly colored red robe, stood like a raging fire. Her beautiful face was calm but she looked excited, searching around for someone among the crowd.

“You may stand,” Abbas XI spoke in a resounding voice. “We don’t need so many customs. Let us start.” When he said that, his eyes intentionally moved to meet Rody’s face. Rody immediately looked away from Jojo.

Gordon immediately stood forward and announced the start of the assessment.

Following Gordon’s order, all the young nobles came out from where they were and gathered in the middle of the hall. Rody was naturally standing right in front.

The Emperor nodded and said a few striving words. Rody did not listen to any of it. Although he did not raise his head, he could feel Jojo’s gaze. He felt awkward but did not dare to raise his head.

The first examination was horse riding. In front of the audience hall was a public square with about 20 horses. All the horses were snow white and there were no mixed breeds. They looked exceptionally eminent.

The young nobles went out of the hall and listened to Gordon as he announced the content of the assessment. The square was earlier, arranged as a military drilling ground. On top of every horse was also a bow and ten arrows. In addition, there was also a lance hanging each horse’s body. However, the heap of the lance had been removed. At a distance were the targets about the height of two to three people.

In the Radiant Empire, martial arts was of great importance. All the nobles had to learn how to fight. The successor of any title had to have a warrior ranking. That was why the examination also placed a lot of importance in martial arts.

The examination was not just simple horseback archery but was

according to the pattern of an actual battle. When the participants got on the horses, they were still far from the targets. They would need to ride and get closer within a certain range before they could shoot. During that time, they were allowed to attack each other and forced others to dismount. Everyone would be attacking one another and would also need to defend themselves. After all, there were only three targets! If they could hit a target, they were considered half successful and if they were knocked down, they were considered eliminated.

Of course, to ensure fairness, the examinations were conducted in groups. Only warriors of the same level would be assessed together. Otherwise, in the assessment a Grade 1 warrior would forever not be able to defeat a Grade 3 warrior.

The young nobles were immediately divided into three groups. Among the Grade 1 warriors was Rody and that group had the most individuals. That was because these nobles wanted to inherit the title. Obviously, before the succession, many whose strengths were better than the Grade 1 standard would conceal their real strength so that they could be grouped together with other Grade 1 warriors in the assessment. In such a case, although there were more opponents, their odds would be greater by relying on their strength as a warrior. Only a small number of people with more confidence in their skills would bother increasing their warrior rank.

The first examination consisted of Grade 3 warriors (Among the young noble warriors here, none exceeded Grade 3 warriors). When Gordon gave the order, four of the participants got on the horses. Ordinarily, the four participants would just need to shoot the three targets. Even if they did not attack each other, they could pass just by shooting the arrow. However, the four crazy participants did not even pick up the bow. The moment they got on their horses, they immediately took the lance and rushed at each other.

The young nobles were confident in their own skills and were full of vigor. They wanted to display their martial prowess in front of the emperor. In their proud minds, the simple archery was unable to satisfy their thirst for glory. Only by dismounting their opponents could they show their bravery as a warrior!

These four participants fought each other forcefully. Rody watched the four participants clash with interest. After all, he was also a true warrior. The four participants also had real talent and were bold enough to use that occasion to display their prowess. For most nobles, their entire future relied on that day. If they displayed extraordinary skill, His Majesty would be happy and they would have a bright future.

The four Grade 3 warriors fought for a long time before there was an outcome. Finally, the sturdiest looking warrior was knocked down by another two participants who had joined forces. On the other hand, the frail looking warrior was already knocked down much earlier. The final two participants looked at each other and came to an understanding. They raised their bows and hit their targets. They hit the bull's eye.

There was a thunderous cheer. Abbas XI also looked happy and stood up to clap his hands.

The following Grade 2 warriors competition on the other hand, was not spectacular. Out of a total of seven participants, some of them were impatient and rode forward to shoot their arrows the moment they got on their horses. There were also some that attacked others fiercely and there were some that hesitated, unsure as to whether they wanted to use the lance or the bow.

At Rody's current level, he no longer had interest in the match between the Grade 2 warriors. He yawned and closed his eyes. He did not notice Jojo looking at him from beside the emperor. Her beautiful eyes flashed a trace of different color.

Chapter 56: Impressive Eight Directions

Rody immediately got on the horse the moment Gordon gave the order. In consideration for the safety of the young nobles with such familial background, the horses were specially selected. These were all gentle horses with good temperament, so that they would be easier to control. If the young nobles fell and injured themselves, then it would be big trouble.

By virtue of Professor Randt's coaching, Rody did not require any effort to control the horse. He held his head high and waited for Gordon's next order.

"Young Master Seth!" A youngster on a horse beside Rody called out.

"Yes?" Rody looked at him. This guy had delicate features but was extremely tall. His eyes seemed to be evasive.

"I am the son of the Kersey Family Earl, Gray. Let us cooperate! This group we are in has so many people. It would definitely become a muddled warfare! We would be much stronger if we cooperate than if we were to fight alone," Gray whispered in a low voice.

Rody looked around and sure enough, all the other young nobles were glancing around with different expressions. There were also some who looked at him maliciously.

"Alright." Rody nodded and gave of a smile that was difficult to perceive.

Commander Gordon then gave the order in a loud voice, "Start!"

All the young nobles on their horses back shouted together and made their horses speed up. Most of them did not grab their bows and arrows but held the lance instead. With a loud shout, more than half of the participants rushed towards Rody.

The successor of the God of War's family was famous for being a

bungling oaf. Some of these people also charged at Rody because they were unhappy that His Majesty the Emperor brought forward the examination date solely for his sake. In the Imperial Capital, it is especially common for people to take the easy way out. In this case, eliminating one more enemy meant one more chance to protect themselves.

Rody looked stern and his eyes glinted in excitement. He tightly held his lance and gave Gray, who was beside him a hand signal. After that, he assumed the standard posture for a cavalry charge. Taking the lead, he rushed towards the participants on his left, with Gray following behind him on his horse back.

The hooves of the horses could clearly be heard galloping on the stone slabs of the square. Rody felt calm as he faced the fierce and malicious participants in front of him.

While still galloping, Rody thrust his lance and managed to hit one of his opponents' body. That person screamed and fell from his horse. Fortunately, the people participating in that examination were all wearing light armor. Otherwise, he would have been skewered as well! If Rody had utilized the momentum of the galloping horse, the armor would have definitely been pierced through.

Rody became the main target of others within the tangled warfare and several lances flew towards him. With a clear mind, Rody shouted and swung his lance in circles like a black dragon coiling up and down. A noble cried out as his waist was hit. He flew and knocked into another warrior. Rody then spotted a gap in the crowd and rushed towards it. He used his lance to block attacks coming from both sides. Not a single one of the participants from either side was able to stop him. They could only hear the sounds of clashing and wherever that Rody went, someone would fall from their horse. Gray who was following closely behind Rody, guarded Rody from being attacked by those coming from the back.

In just one charge, Rody managed to knock down six opponents.

He shook off the crowd and reined in his horse. The young nobles all became frightened and stopped attacking. They looked at each other for a moment before they shouted and rushed towards Rody.

Although the horsemanship of the young nobles was passable, they were only beginners in cavalry battles. Rody once again assumed the posture for cavalry charges and rushed towards his opponents. Making use of his horse, he swung his lance and two more opponents were immediately knocked down from their horses. Those young nobles did not know how to use the power of the horses to engage in cavalry battles. They only knew how to wield the lances as foot soldiers. How could a human's strength block the sprinting power of a horse? Not to mention that at that time, Rody was already on par with Grade 3 warriors. The team with dozens of participants were immediately defeated by Rody and Gray.

With two sprints, Rody only had four opponents remaining. The other participants were all lying down on the ground groaning in pain and were unable to get up. The horses that had lost their masters had long ran away.

The remaining four opponents were the best among the Grade 1 warriors. The two of them glanced at each other and rushed towards Rody. It was clear that they were instructed by professional soldiers as they knew how to lean and make use of the horse's speed. They came from both sides with one of them attacking from the top while the other attacking from the bottom. Their lances simultaneously headed for Rody's head and waist.

Rody sneered. He suddenly leaned and took the lance with his right hand. After that, he exhaled and threw the lance. The lance flew forward and hit the chest of the warrior on the left and he fell from the horse before he even had the chance to groan. At this moment, the person on the right was also approaching. Rody dodged the lance going for his waist and caught it tightly with his armpit. As his opponent struggled, Rody grabbed his belt and

immediately pulled him down from his horse before throwing him onto the ground. He did not bother to look at the person on the ground and took the lance, which he grabbed from his opponent. He then rushed towards the remaining two participants. Gray was close behind Rody. He lifted his lance and rushed towards the person on the right.

Rody's opponent had turned pale a long time ago. When he saw Rody's lance in front of him, he suddenly felt weak and fell down from his horse. Rody thrust into the empty space and was also shocked for a moment. Suddenly, he felt a burst of cold wind from behind and he sneered. He immediately ducked and felt a strong momentum swinging behind his back. Rody looked back and saw Gray watching him with a fierce expression. Rody's original ally also swung his lance but his target was not Rody. It was Rody's horse!

There was a cry of alarm as his horse moved back a few meters.

Rody looked back at Gray and lightly said, "I already guessed that you were problematic earlier! Come!"

Gray turned pale and gritted his teeth. He was holding the lance in his trembling hands.

Originally, Rody was busy and did not use the lance to ward off the blows. He knew that he would not be able to wield the two meter long lance properly with just one arm because he was leaning down. Even if he persisted on parrying that way, he could not prevent his opponent from striking the leg of his horse. That was why Rody decisively threw the lance. As they were very near each other and Rody was strong, the other participant could not dodge in time. Before the opponent's weapon could strike his horse's leg, it was already deflected by Rody's lance.

"Good! Seth! You really have hidden strength!" Gray gritted his teeth and grinned. "But now you have no weapons! Let's see how you are going to fight with me!"

After finishing what he had to say, Gray thrust the lance towards Rody. On the other hand, Rody did something unexpected. He kicked his horse and ran to the left.

Gray laughed. “Haha! Did you think you could run away? I...”

Suddenly there was a black flash. Gray screamed and fell from his horse before he could finish his last sentence. An arrow had pierced through his light armor and was stuck in his shoulder.

Rody put the bow and arrows down and went to Gray’s side. He looked coldly at the sweating and bleeding Gray on the floor.

“You must be surprised that I already saw through you earlier? Idiot! I always had a bad reputation! In your eyes, I am just a bungling oaf! That is why I suspected you the moment you wanted to team up with me. Out of so many warriors, you decided to team up with this useless bungling oaf. Don’t you think that is suspicious?”

Rody laughed grimly. “Just lie down there! I have never killed anyone so, you are lucky. I do not want your life.”

After having said that, Rody without looking at Gray, turned around and rode his horse towards the table in the audience hall.

In the square, collective groans of the participants could be heard. Without any doubt, Rody was the only winner of that competition. He did not even need to show his archery skill because even if he did not hit his target, there was nobody else to compete with...

On top of that, considering the fact that he managed to hit Gray with an arrow, it was unlikely that he would miss his target.

The square was silent for a long time before a thunderous applause broke out. The Imperial Guards were also veterans and were naturally able to tell that he was very good.

Rody dismounted from his horse and stood in front of the table. He looked at Abbas XI with his head held high.

The emperor slowly stood up and reluctantly smiled. He gently said, “Good! As expected of the heir of the Empire’s God of War!” After that, the emperor gave a forced laugh with somewhat insufficient lung power.

Rody cursed in his heart.

Despicable.

However, Rody pretended to look loyal and went down on his knees.

Gordon looked surprised and his voice trembled in excitement. He loudly spoke, “The horsemanship and archery examination has ended! Winners, please enter the hall!”

Rody pursed his eyebrows as he felt an earnest adoration and fiery gaze on him. It was a look of surprise and affection. Without a doubt, it was Jojo’s gaze.

Rody subconsciously looked towards Nicole. He saw her sweet, quiet smile as she looked at him affectionately. Only Rody could read her expression.

Chapter 57: Inheriting Peerage in the Audience Hall

All the participants who passed the examination were gathered in the audience hall. Those who were eliminated had lost the opportunity to inherit their title.

The Radiant Empire's tradition of inheriting titles started during Dandong's era. Abbas the Great was afraid that his kingdom would only experience a short moment of glory and then decline. To ensure the quality of the Empire's upper class, Dandong was asked to design the examination system. It should be known that the history's greatest emperor, Abbas the Great, was exceptional. His foresight with regard to this examination was ample proof.

Any noble who was in line for the title of earl or higher had to pass the examination to inherit the title. Those that could not pass the examination would be eliminated.

Of course, a noble would not have only one son. If one son was eliminated, their other sons could also participate in the examination. They believed that at least one of their sons would pass the examination. Even if all their sons failed to live up to their expectations, the emperor would not deprive them of their title. They could wait for outstanding individuals in the next generation to participate in the examination and restore their titles.

In other words, the noble title bestowed upon the family was always reserved. If a family member of that generation had the ability, they would be able to inherit the title. However, if they did not have the ability, they could always wait for the next generation to try again.

Dandong set up such an examination system to maintain the standards of the Empire and to prevent the upper class of the society from rotting after long years of peace. That was one of the reasons the Empire was still powerful after 200 years.

The military examination was over and now it was time for the other examinations.

His Majesty personally presided over and assessed the second round of examination. Several elderly royal think-tanks also separately assessed a few young nobles.

That examination was a walk in the park for Rody. Nicole had hired a lot of scholars to teach him both political and other knowledge. As a result, Rody had already built a strong foundation. On top of that, Rody had read many books at home and gained a lot of knowledge. Fortunately for him, even if there were occasionally some strange questions that he could not answer, he could ask Andy, the 200-year old monster in his mind. The old thing in his head was an encyclopedia by himself!

Of course, Rody still had his own weakness. His weakness was his faith! Most of the questions about theology could not be answered by Rody. He could not be blamed. From the start, he already felt suspicious about the issue of faith. After all, those he had dealings with like Andy, Old Mark, and even Dandong who died 200 years ago were all rebels against God.

Fortunately, he managed to answer those questions with Andy's help.

After the end of a day of examinations, a few of the families were delighted while a few were worried. Some of the younger nobles had been eliminated but their families were probably not very disappointed. As some of them were the eldest sons, their younger brothers would rejoice as they would then have the opportunity to inherit the title. However, there were also families that just lost their last glimmer of hope to restore the glory of their family. They could only wait until the next generation to inherit the title.

Rody and seven other young nobles stood respectfully in the hall, waiting for the Emperor to confer on them their titles. Abbas XI was currently experiencing a complicated feeling. The present

situation was going according to his plans. He was originally hoping to send the Tulip Family to the front lines to be made as a scapegoat. Allowing him to inherit the title was as planned. However, the strength this kid displayed that day was too amazing! He could defeat 16 Grade 1 swordsmen on his own! On top of that, his opponents could not even fend him off! He had already surpassed the level of a Grade 3 swordsman!

This kid has amazing strength. I am afraid of what he will do if he is sent to the northwest!

Moreover, there was Gray. The Emperor did not send him. However, Abbas XI knew who sent Gray to attack Rody. He heard that the Commander in Chief in the north, Milo did not have a good relationship with Seth. Meanwhile, Gray was one of Milo's close friends. Those kids were always up to mischief.

That Milo is skilled and I really trust him. However, he seemed too anxious about sending people to the Northwest to help with the war. He is insistent on sending the Northern Legion to the Northwest. He is too impatient about earning merits... It is no wonder that he is thinking about how to suppress the Tulip Family...

Milo must have known my true intention of letting Seth inherit the title. This is why he dared to resort to lowly tricks, right before my very eyes... Hmm.

Abbas XI thought of many things before he slowly looked at the eight young nobles before him. Other than Rody who had a calm expression, the other seven looked flush as they could not suppress their inner excitement.

“You all make me very proud,” Abbas slowly spoke. His voice was loud and clear. “You are all also worthy of your family's glory!”

After that, His Majesty the Emperor stood up and lifted a scepter which symbolized supreme authority and loudly proclaimed, “I, the descendant of Abbas the Great and the supreme ruler of the

Radiant Empire, hereby declare that you have officially inherited the title of your family and that your glory will coexist with the Empire!”

“Long live the Emperor!” All the guards inside and outside the audience hall shouted loudly. The eight young warriors knelt down immediately.

The Emperor slowly walked in front of them and took out his sword. He gently placed the blade of the sword on the shoulders of each and every one of them. He then stretched out his hand allowing them to kiss his ring.

Rody felt the Emperor’s cold hand and saw that his smile had no excitement or joy. He smiled coldly in his heart but maintained his composure.

Just when the eight young nobles stood up to accept the congratulations of the other nobles, a strange and sad horn sound was heard in the audience hall.

“Aargh!” A lot of people cried out in alarm and felt nervous. His Majesty the Emperor also changed his expression.

That was because they realized that it was the sound of a special horn in the Imperial Capital. Following the teachings of Abbas the Great, whenever there was a military emergency or any important situations, the messenger could blow that horn. With that, all the guards would not obstruct their passage into the audience hall. Even in the middle of the night, horses and carriages were not allowed to be obstructed.

They heard the sound of galloping quickly approaching from outside. A warrior wearing silver armor rode all the way to the audience hall. He almost rolled down from his horse. His whole face was sweaty, his armor was a mess, and he had no helmet. Tied to his back, a red colored [command flag](#) that was used for emergencies, fluttered in the wind,

Gordon and several guards immediately surrounded him. Although he could not be obstructed on his way into the palace, they still needed to inspect him before he could see the Emperor.

The silver armored warrior could hardly stand. Supported by two of the guards, he quickly took out a [command token](#). It was the [passage token](#) of the Northwest Legion Commander!

Gordon nodded his head and personally brought the warrior into the hall.

“Your Majesty! Military Army of the Northwest!”

Abbas XI trembled for a moment, struggled to stand firmly before he commanded loudly, “Speak!”

The silver warrior hesitated for a moment. He was not a fool. The audience hall right now was filled with a lot of people. It would not be good to report in front of so many people.

Abbas XI’s heart sank and he lightly spoke, “Just speak. We cannot hide this forever”

The silver warrior immediately knelt to the ground.

"Your Majesty! Two days ago, the crown prince of the Great Moon Kingdom, Reuenthal led an armored cavalry of 18,000 in a two-day and night raid over five 500 miles! We have lost the Northwest cities of Trier and Loulan! The garrisons were defeated and we have lost 30,000 soldiers! Currently, Reuenthal's army has already formed a pincer attack and has surrounded the Northwest Legion! General Reuben has requested that His Majesty quickly send reinforcements!"

“Huh?”

The audience hall became very noisy There were those who screamed and shrieked. There were also those who whispered to one another. All of them were terrified.

Abbas XI’s face turned pale and became gloomy. He looked

resolutely at the silver armored warrior for a moment. Soon after that, the Emperor spoke, “Gordon, summon all the ministers.” The Emperor sounded lifeless. He then looked at the nobles in the hall, waved and sighed. “Those unrelated to this can all disperse now!”

Everyone knelt and dispersed. Although Rody had just inherited the title, he had not taken up any government post. So, he followed Nicole out of the hall. In the end, only a small number of nobles holding government posts remained in the hall.

Along the way, many nobles talked about the war in the Northwest. Rody, without saying a word followed Nicole and the crowd out.

At the square, Instructor Carter felt excited when he heard about the war in the Northwest and whispered, “Young ma... no, I mean...Your Excellency. Now, will His Majesty dispatch us out on an expedition? Every time the Empire entered a difficult situation, it would be the Tulip’s Family time to earn merits!”

Rody looked unconcerned and glanced at Nicole. When he saw Nicole’s preoccupied look, he smiled and whispered, “Yes. Instructor Carter... It seems like it is time for us to fight.”

However, Rody had something in his heart which he did not say.

Are we going to survive this?

command token, 令牌 (lìng pái), is the authority token.

passage token, 通行令牌 (tōngxíng lìng pái), works like a visa, guaranteeing safe passage through any checkpoint.

command flag, 令旗 (lìng qí)

Chapter 58: A Tragedy

While the Imperial Capital was shrouded in a mix of emotions, Abbas XI and the ministers were anxiously discussing the war. Rody returned to the Tulip Family's home and was unable to sleep. The situation in the Northwest where a fierce battle was ongoing, changed yet again.

Somewhere at the edge of the mountains in the western plains of the Northwest Region, the light of the night had already been shrouded as the moon was hidden by the clouds. The moon only showed half of its face occasionally. Under the skies without stars, the army was struggling to march on a mountain path.

The soldiers wore the armor of the Radiant Empire and looked extremely tired. Many of them were dragging their tired legs, following the person in front with their heads down. The flag bearer on horseback was also in low spirits. He could normally lift the banner with the thorny flower but now he only managed to pull it along. He also struggled to make sure that he did not fall down.

The soldiers and the officers were all gloomy and feared for the future. They were originally under the command of the Northwest Legion and were stationed at the Blackstone Fortress. However, two days ago they received an order from the commander of the Northwest Legion, General Reuben, to give up Blackstone Fortress and to fortify Watt Fortress of the Northwest Legion at all cost.

At that moment, the whole army was surrounded by a pessimistic atmosphere. They all knew the Northwest Legion was gradually losing ground. General Reuben's main force of 150,000 was completely defeated by the devil, Reuenthal of the Great Moon Kingdom and his armored cavalry.

After losing most of the territories on the Northwest Rostock Province, including the headquarters, Redwood Fortress, General

Reuben led the Northwest Legion to stand fast at the last major fortress, Watt Fortress.

They heard a lot of news during the past two days. They heard that Reuenthal raided the strongholds around Watt Fortress for two days and two nights and captured those positions. Even the Loulan Fortress and Trier Fortress were captured in one night.

The commander of the Northwest Legion ordered everyone to regroup together with the main force. This order was not wrong. As they were already at a disadvantage, it was better for them to gather their forces for a confrontation compared to spreading out only to be defeated one by one.

However, when the commander of the Blackstone Fortress received an order from General Reuben, he could not help but gave a wry smile. He was ordered to immediately deploy his 15,000 soldiers in the Blackstone Fortress and to gather them at the headquarters. General Reuben only gave him one day and one night to do so.

What the hell!

The commander of the Blackstone Fortress turned around to look at the long line of soldiers behind him and cursed in his heart.

How are we supposed to get there within two days? It is more than 600 miles away! We are not horsemen! We are just infantries! How are we supposed to travel 600 miles within 2 days on foot? What a joke! We also have the supplies to bring along. It's not like these things can fly!

The commander could not help but seek the blessings of the gods. His army had been walking for the entire day without rest.

Even if the soldiers could reach their destination, they would not be in any condition to fight. The soldiers were already too tired to even walk... If... If we encounter an enemy right now...then...

As he thought about this, he also thought about the news he

received two days ago.

It was said that two other garrisons also received the order to regroup and were on the way to join the main force. However, they were intercepted by the cavalry of the foreign barbarians and were almost completely annihilated...

There is no choice but to beg the gods for blessings!

He looked at the surrounding terrain. Fortunately, it was not an open area like the plains. The size of the hills around them made the path narrow. Even if they were to encounter their enemy, the opponent's cavalry would not be able to attack properly.

At that moment, several scout horsemen came back from afar. The commander was immediately alert and asked, "How is it?"

One of the scout horsemen was sweating profusely but he still managed to keep his calm and spoke loudly, "Your Excellency, we are nearing the end of the hill path. We will be out of this hill in about half an hour! After crossing this hill, we will be in an open field. There are no signs of the enemy. However, we cannot find a better place to camp for the night. In front of us is an open field and beside the field is a small forest."

The commander carefully listened to the report of the scout without missing a word and was silent for a while.

It seems like it will rain tonight so camping in the forest will not be a big problem. We will not need to worry about the enemy using a fire attack... Sigh, I really hope we will not meet the enemy. The Great Moon Kingdom will probably not attack if it rains. Moreover, the muddy water would not be suitable for a cavalry charge.

"Order the army to speed up. We will leave this hill and pitch camp!" He loudly issued the order.

The soldiers who received the order were already very tired. However, when they heard that they could pitch camp and rest

soon, they increased their pace.

When the soldiers crossed the hill and saw the flat plains in front of them, they uncontrollably let out an exhausting cheer, “We can finally rest!”

After the order to pitch the camp was given, the soldiers became busy. The only thing that disappointed the soldiers was that the forest the scout mentioned was too small. The tall and thin trees were saplings and could not be chopped down to use as materials to build the camp. In desperation, they used the simple lumber from their supplies to form a frail wall.

However, the warriors felt thankful as the enemy did not appear. The Devil of the Great Moon Kingdom also did not appear. Probably with that kind of weather, the enemy would also feel exhausted. Everyone believed that they could at least safely survive the first night.

A veteran soldier taught the restless amateur soldiers not to panic. If the enemy made a surprise attack, the scout horsemen would warn them first. If they wanted to escape, it would not be too late to run after they hear the sounds of the enemy's drums and horns.

The whole camp was in disorder as the soldiers were busy making tents or preparing a meal. “Boom!” The loud sound of thunder was heard as the lightning struck. It immediately started to rain heavily.

The soldiers all gave a sigh of relief as it finally rained. Since it rained, the enemy cavalry would not appear!

When the sky grew dark, an amateur soldier was up and totally soaked in the rain. He was trying to use a hammer to repair a wall that was damaged by the wind. Suddenly, he sensed something and raised his head to look at the open space, feeling alarmed. There seemed to be a black shadow in the distance.

“What is that!”

A veteran soldier turned his head to look at it. His face changed immediately and he said, “It looks like... a person! My God! It is the enemy! It is the Great Moon Kingdom’s cavalry!”

“Enemy attack!”

It was unclear who shouted the warning first but it was immediately transmitted throughout the army. All of them were frightened. They all screamed and threw away the tents and fences that they were about to erect. The infantries searched for their swords in panic and the cavalry units quickly donned their armor. The whole camp was in an uproar.

It could not be denied that within the past 200 years of the Radiant Empire’s history, their traditional martial spirit had created a lot of heroes! At that time, the person who still showed such spirit was the loyal and courageous commander.

“Why are you panicking? Everyone take up your arms!” The order was given as the commander immediately took out his sword and beheaded a few soldiers who were running away in a panic. “If this confusion persists, all of us will not live! Infantries! Battle formation!” His majestic voice could be heard permeating the night. The commander kept running as he cut down chaotic soldiers who did not obey his orders and were running around blindly. Then he gathered the scattered soldiers to form an array.

“Fools! Do not panic! The enemy is still lining up! Until then, we still have time!” The commander tried to calm down as many soldiers as possible. “Pick up your weapons and shields! Shields form the first row! Lances form the second row!”

A few soldiers finally grouped into a battle formation. There were also about 500 horsemen who positioned themselves behind the infantries. These 500 horsemen were personally trained by him and were elites. They were all filled with determination as they tightly held the reins and their swords.

The dull sound of the horse hooves trampling on the earth could be heard. Tens of thousands of horse hooves made the earth shake and dust fly. Their trampling sound also masked the roaring thunder.

The commander watched the speed of the approaching enemy and had some doubts.

Something is not right. Why are they charging so slowly?

As the distant black figures approached, the soldiers of the Empire were finally able to clearly see the appearance of the enemy cavalry. They were even able to see the tassels on the enemy's helmets. The commander suddenly showed fear and shouted, "Not good! They are mounted archers!"

"Kill!" Suddenly, a frightening piercing sound could be heard as the enemy cavalry let loose thousands of arrows into the sky. There were not enough soldiers with shields and they were unable to withstand all of the arrows in the sky. An uncountable number of soldiers gave blood-curdling screams as they fell to the ground. There were also some shield soldiers who just lifted their shields only to have them be pierced through. Suddenly someone shouted, "Mounted archers! Everyone run!"

Almost instantly, the morale of the army collapsed and the soldiers fell into disarray. Everyone knew that the infantries were no match for mounted archers. Their limited equipment would not be able to protect them from the arrows. When the enemy had finished shooting the arrows, they performed a cavalry charge. It was a massacre.

Countless soldiers were shouting, "Run! Run for your lives!" The commander of the Imperial Army went to the crumbled infantry formation and cut down a few soldiers who were trying to escape. Yet, he was still unable to control the situation. In addition, the disorderly soldiers also destroyed the alignment of the cavalry behind him.

At this point, the enemy cavalry suddenly became quiet for a moment. Soon after that, a loud voice shouted, “Change to your swords! Charge! [Strell!](#)”

“Strell!” Thousands of horsemen shouted loudly. The commander of the Imperial Army realized that he and his army were finished.

The black armored figures roared and charged at an incredible speed. The earth trembled under the charge of the cavalry. The sound of the iron hooves coming into contact with the earth made it seem like everything in its path would be trampled.

With a thunderous roar, the enemy cavalry broke through the fragile infantry formation. Those who valiantly held their positions were crushed before they could even take a good look at the cruel and twisted faces of their enemies who were wearing helmets.

The enemy cavalry quickly passed through the infantry’s line of defense and directly charged at the camp of the Imperial Army.

The remaining infantries from the broken formation were being killed by a stream of cavalry soldiers, continuously coming from behind. They were either cut down by the enemy or trampled by the enemy's horses before they could even swing their swords.

The commander of the Imperial Army fell into despair as he watched the infantries under his command torn apart easily by the enemy. He trembled and spoke in a deathly quiet voice to his messenger, “Pass down my orders. Tell everyone to escape. Run as far away as possible!”

After he gave his final order of his life, the loyal servant of the Empire turned to his 500 horsemen and spoke, "I used to be the bodyguard of the Tulip Family Duke! There are absolutely no cowards under the banner of the Tulip Family! Are you all afraid?"

“Follow His Excellency!” The cries of the 500 horsemen seemed

to overshadow the sound of screaming and killing in the air. Five hundred swords shined as they were held high.

The commander no longer looked behind him. He rode his horse forward with a sword in his hand, fully determined not to turn back. No one among the 500 valiant and elite horsemen hesitated as well. They drew their swords and followed their commander.

The last cavalry of the Empire struck their enemy ruthlessly. As the momentum of the enemy cavalries was weakened by the infantries, the Empire had the upper hand at the beginning of the attack. As such, they also bought time for those who were retreating. In future generations, historians believed that without the commander's heroic charge, the army of 15,000 support soldiers would have been completely annihilated.

Nevertheless, their assault did not last long. The valiant commander and his 500 horsemen were like stones thrown into a river. Although they could create some splashes, they were soon washed away under the current of the river.

In that battle, the Great Moon Kingdom cavalry of 20,000 defeated the army of 15,000 defenders sent to reinforce the Northwest Legion. For the entire night, the plain was filled with the roar of the armored cavalry of the Great Moon Kingdom and the miserable cries of the Empire's infantries. It was not a battle but the cavalry's wanton massacre of the defeated army!

That night, the 15,000 soldiers of the Imperial Army were completely defeated and less than 5,000 soldiers managed to escape. The lives of those 5,000 people were exchanged with the lives of the courageous commander and his 500 elite horsemen. However, there were no records of the commander's name.

In that battle, the crown prince of the Great Moon Kingdom, Reuenthal and his 20,000 strong cavalry had a decisive victory. They completely defeated the reinforcements of the Northwest Legion. They had killed over 10,000 soldiers and took no prisoners.

Foreign word, meaning kill.

Chapter 59: Lightning God's Whip

“Have you read His Majesty’s orders?” Nicole sighed.

Last night, the commander of the Imperial Guards, Gordon came and announced the latest order of His Majesty the Emperor. “Tulip Family’s Duke Seth Rudolph, as the Commander of the Central Cavalry, as well as the Northwest Inspection Special Envoy with emergency military powers, will lead 20,000 cavalrymen to reinforce the Northwest!”

Rody sighed. “I know but to suddenly give me such an important position... is the emperor not afraid that someone will object?”

Nicole gave a cold smile. “How could no one oppose this decision? Gordon told me that the argument inside the palace last night was really intense. The one who opposed this decision the most was the Military Minister. He wanted his nephew, Milo, to reinforce the Northwest Legion! Everybody knows that the Northern Legion is the Empire’s most elite army. He wanted to take this opportunity to earn merits for his family. However, the Tulip Family also had its own influence. Naturally, someone would support us!”

Rody was silent. Although he did not witness the arguments in the palace last night, he could imagine it. Although he had now inherited the title, he was still a young man without any proper qualifications. The hasty decision of giving him such a high post would inevitably be met with opposition.

Fate was smiling on Rody. It certainly looked like he had prevailed.

The Flaming Tulip. Since the birth of the Empire, every heir in the family was an invincible commander. There had never been a defeated Tulip Family general. It was a legend! For hundreds of years, whenever there were wars in the Empire, sending a Tulip Family member to lead the troops in battle would always

guarantee victories!

This would not be an exception. On top of that, His Majesty would also support dispatching him as the emperor had wanted to use the Great Moon Kingdom to get rid of Rody.

“What are you thinking about?” Nicole looked at the silent Rody and gently asked.

“Nothing.” Rody looked at Nicole’s charming face and smiled. He slowly walked to a window and opened it. He gazed at the horizon for a while before speaking to Nicole, “You see, the sky is so red. Many people must have bled a lot last night.”

“What?” Nicole did not understand what he meant.

Rody sighed and spoke, “Nicole, although I do not belong to the Tulip Family, I am a citizen of the Empire! I am also a warrior! As warriors, we must use our power to protect our loved ones and our homeland.” Rody paused and turned around to look at Nicole. He slowly said, “You are my loved one and the Empire is my homeland!”

Nicole blushed but she did not avoid Rody’s gaze and softly said, “So, are you prepared to travel to the Northwest to protect our homeland?”

Rody did not answer her but spoke profoundly, “I have heard of the situation in the Northwest. Wherever the army of the Great Moon Kingdom went, whether they were barracks, towns or villages, it would all turn barren! Every time they fight, they do not take prisoners. The defeated, regardless of age or gender, would all be killed! I cannot be indifferent! Nicole, I cannot imagine! If it were my family... if you... encounter such terrible fate, I will not be able to continue living! That is why I must not let that happen!”

Nicole was lost in thought as she looked at Rody. The Rody she saw in her eyes was no longer the big bumbling boy whom she

knew. His masculine manner, his angular facial features, and steely eyes revealed an extremely confident self. In fact, throughout the past few days, she had felt his transformation. Every day, she could feel him grow stronger and more mature.

“Rody...” Nicole spoke in a gentle voice. “Go. Whatever it is you want to do, go and do it!”

Rody sighed and sternly said, “Nicole, recently I learned a phrase.”

“What?”

“Destroy the enemy!” Rody’s tone was loud but unnaturally firm. “Maximize the destruction of the enemy to maximize the amount of self-preservation!”

“So, I want to go to the Northwest!” he said. “I hope to make a difference! I believe I can do it!”

At that moment, a sarcastic voice entered his mind, “Youngsters these days do not understand how complicated and tough life is... Ah...”

Rody did not change his expression but he smiled in his heart. “Andy, do not think you can stay out of this. You remember your promise to help me? In order to make sure that you are not lazy, I will take your skeleton with me. If I die in the Northwest, you will not be able to run as well!”

“Shit!” Andy’s voice sounded agitated. “Who taught you this! When did such an honest person like you become so... so...”

Rody laughed coldly and replied, “It’s you! My dear Andy! You are my teacher!”

No longer paying attention to the raging skeleton, Rody stepped forward and gently hugged Nicole. He did not dare to hug her too hard as he was afraid that this was a dream and that he would wake up if he were to use too much force.

That afternoon, Gordon led Rody to the Central Cavalry's barracks. However, when Rody entered the camp with Gordon, he almost could not believe his eyes!

Is this the Empire's elite 'Lightning God's Whip'? Once upon a time, the world's invincible army?

The sentries in the barracks were standing at the doorway, looking dispirited. The training ground had no soldiers training! What made Rody's eyes open wider was that there were clothes hanging on the training grounds! Among them were two pairs of women's underwear! Why would the Empire's most elite army have women in it?!

"What the hell is this?" Rody cursed. Rody felt depressed, furious and many other kinds of emotions. For a moment, he did not want to bring these soldiers to the battlefield and felt troubled. More importantly, he had learned of the great successes of the 'Lightning God's Whip' when he studied history at the Academy. The army held a special position in Rody's heart. As a result, he felt discouraged and frustrated when he saw the current poor state of his idols.

From a distant, a few officers were stumbling as they ran towards him. The man at the front was still putting on his military uniform while running!

"Your Excellency! I am a Central Cavalry commander, Saunder!" The soldier ran up to Rody and spoke while still panting.

Rody looked at Saunder and saw his unkempt beard as well as his flushed face. Even though he was a few steps away, he could smell the strong scent of alcohol.

Rody suppressed his anger, gritted his teeth and said, "I am the Tulip Family's Duke of the Empire, Seth Rudolph. According to the order made by His Majesty the Emperor, I am the current commanding officer of the Central Cavalry. Please take me to see your

regimental commander!”

The commander Saunder looked embarrassed and mumbled, “Please go into the large tent and wait for a moment. I will immediately notify the others.”

Rody stayed silent and gave the order which was personally signed by His Majesty the Emperor to the commander. After that, he walked towards the large tent.

“Commander Gordon!” Rody could not help but feel angry. “Is this the Empire’s most elite cavalry?”

Gordon sighed and smiled coldly, “Young Mas... I mean, Your Excellency. This is... you see... it is also hard for me to say.”

Rody smiled. “Commander Gordon, you used to work with my father. You do not need to be polite. When nobody is around, you can just call me Seth.” This was something Nicole taught him. Nicole knew about Gordon's identity and taught Rody to have a good relationship with him.

Gordon also smiled and replied, “Yes, Young Master Seth. Now that I think about it, I even carried you when you were a child.”

Rody looked calm and collected but his heart whispered.

Is that so? I do not know this. After all, I only became this young master two months ago.

“Young Master Seth, do you know that the Central Cavalry was considered the Empire’s most elite army by foreigners. However, in my opinion, any border guard randomly chosen would be stronger than them.”

“Why? Why has it become like this? Aren’t they the famous ‘Lightning God’s Whip’? Aargh!”

“Why?” Gordon sneered. “Because it is not 200 years ago anymore! On top of that, the Central Cavalry’s commander is not someone from the Tulip Family!”

Chapter 60: The Last Hope of the Empire

Rody nodded his head. He now knew when to speak and when to shut up. Some things were better off kept in his heart and not spoken.

They soon arrived at the large tent and Rody looked disappointed when he saw the dust gathered in the tent. “Commander Gordon, I hope that His Majesty the Emperor will permit me to take at least 20,000 Imperial Guards to the Northwest. It is not a matter of the ‘Lightning God’s Whip’ anymore. Look at it this way, even if I take 100,000 of these troops with me, I will probably die.”

Gordon sighed and smiled. “Young Master Seth, I have also served the Central Cavalry. During those years when the old duke was still alive, the Central Cavalry was not like this. In the past few years...”

Rody thought to himself and whispered, “Commander Gordon, what should I do? Even if I bring this army, they would be of no use. Even if I want to reorganize them, I am only a commander. Although I have the title of ‘Duke’, I would not be able to command the entire Central Cavalry. On top of that, His Majesty ordered me to leave tomorrow. What can I do in just a day? You could probably also guess their combat readiness...”

Gordon smiled and slowly said, “Young Master Seth, His Majesty only ordered you to act as a commander. He asked you to take 20,000 soldiers there but never asked you to take which troop. I served here before and have some experience. Although many of my old companions are no longer here, one or two of my friends have remained in this army. I won’t speak for the troops in the other units but the unit trained by my two friends would not be too bad!”

Rody nodded, feeling grateful.

Suddenly, he heard the sound of a bugle outside followed by

sounds of hurried footsteps. A group of soldiers rushed into the tent and stood at both sides of the tent. They seemed to be alarmed.

A short while later, the sound of leather boots trampling on the ground could be heard outside. The flaps of the large tent were then opened and a few officers walked in.

They were led by a middle-aged man wearing a silver uniform. He smiled and walked towards Rody.

“Your Excellency must be the Duke of the Tulip Family. I am the Commanding-in-Chief of the Central Cavalry, Barry.”

“General!” Rody immediately saluted. Even though he was now a duke, his rank was only of a military commander and it was considered a subordinate of the other party.

“You do not need to salute me!” Barry waved his hand. “I rushed here when I heard that the Duke of the Tulip Family had arrived.” Barry then shouted, “Attention!”

Drum rolls were immediately heard outside the tent. When the drumming was heard, the officers moved to stand at attention in two rows.

“Everybody, this is the Commander of the Imperial Guards, Gordon and the Duke of the Tulip Family!” Barry laughed as he sat on his chair.

The officers, in succession, came forward and saluted him, “Your Excellency!” Rody did not say anything but kept wondering who among them was Gordon's ‘old friend’.

When everyone had re-assumed their positions Barry said, “Your Excellency, we have not had such an honor for a long time. Today, I have summoned all the Central Cavalry officers here just to welcome you.”

“General, you are too polite!” Rody smiled faintly. He then said, “By the order of His Majesty, I am the commander of the Central

Cavalry. His Majesty wants me to take 20,000 men to the Northwest tomorrow. I believe the general already knows this.”

Barry nodded and replied, “Yes. I just don’t know which unit Your Excellency is supposed to take with you.”

Rody laughed faintly, “His Majesty did not say. I think I am supposed to decide for myself.” When he finished speaking, he swept his eyes slowly across the officers present, scrutinizing them as he did.

There was silence in the tent. The officers being scrutinized had their mouths closed tightly and their heads lowered. All of them knew about the war in the Northwest. Even though the Northwest Legion was powerful, it was still utterly destroyed by the Great Moon Kingdom’s armored cavalry. Only God knew whether the pitiful General Reuben had his head chopped off by the Great Moon Kingdom’s scimitars or not. Wouldn’t sending 20,000 men there right now be like sending them to their doom?

Rody’s eyes lit up when he saw a man standing at the back. He was wearing an officer’s uniform and looked resolute. He did not evade Rody’s gaze like the others. That person was about 40 years old. His dark skin seemed to tell this man have been through hardships and was also experienced. In a glance, he seemed to be a veteran of the battlefield.

Rody had no time to play mind games. He went to the front of that officer and asked, “You! What is your name?”

“Sieg, Commander of the Wolves Fang Division!” He spoke in a strong voice.

Rody nodded and looked happy as he asked, “Commander Sieg, are you willing to accompany me to the Northwest?”

Sieg was so excited that his dark face turned red. He loudly shouted, “I am willing to follow the Tulip Family’s banner!”

Rody gave a sigh of relief. He then turned around and told Barry

loudly, “General Barry, report to His Majesty that I am taking the Central Cavalry’s Wolves Fang Division with me to the Northwest!” Rody was slightly disturbed as he realized that this division was the only one with competent soldiers. He was worried that Barry would be unwilling to let them go.

However, Barry gave a sigh of relief and smiled as he loudly said, “Since Your Excellency appreciates Sieg, I permit him and the Wolves Fang Division to accompany you!” Barry then shouted loudly, “Commander Sieg!”

“Yes, Sir!” A flash of disdain could be seen in Sieg’s eyes. Nevertheless, he still stepped forward.

Barry laughed loudly, “I now appoint you as the deputy commander. The new commander of the Wolves Fang Division will be the Duke of the Tulip Family, Seth Rudolph! Take this time to prepare yourself. You will leave tomorrow morning!”

“Yes!” Sieg lowered his head in salute while ignoring the stares of the other commanders. They seemed to take pleasure in someone else’s misfortune.

What Rody did not know was that Sieg was an honest and frank person. He had never joined his fellow officers in wallowing and had never earned their support. When he was chosen to go to the Northwest, everyone took pleasure in his misfortune. General Barry too. It would be easier for him with one less honest subordinate. It would be even better if Sieg died in the Northwest! That way, it would be more convenient for General Barry to indulge in corrupt practices!

Rody, who was still worried followed Sieg and visited the military camp of the Wolves Fang Division.

The military camp of the Wolves Fang Division was located at the left back of the Central Cavalry main camp. Rody, Sieg, and Gordon rode there on their horses. When they arrived at the training grounds of the camp, they saw a group of cavalymen

occupying the training grounds. They were charging in formation. The young horsemen were repeatedly shooting their arrows. On the sidelines was a stern-looking officer holding a small banner.

On the other side of the training grounds, a pair of cavalrymen assumed an assault formation and were charging forward. The cavalrymen rode towards the forest, shouting 'Kill!' Similarly, another officer was waving a black colored banner at the sidelines.

Sieg looked a bit proud. Then, he suddenly shouted to a nearby messenger, "Tell them to stop and come over here!"

With the instructions given to the messenger, the two officers that held the banners gave the signal and both groups of cavalrymen immediately stopped their training. They gathered and tidied up their lances, bows, and arrows. They then gathered and divided themselves into two squads in an orderly manner! The men, with their horses, were silent.

Rody felt excited. He kicked his horse with his heels to rush up to them. However, before he reached the squads, the cavalrymen immediately took out their scimitars. Dozens of eyes were glaring at Rody. It seemed that if Rody took another step forward, he would be greeted by hundreds of scimitars.

"Your Excellency!" Sieg quickly ran forward and ordered everyone to sheath their weapons.

Following his orders, the cavalrymen immediately sheathed their scimitars.

"Your Excellency! This is the rule of the Wolf Cavalry! Without the order, no one is allowed to approach the battle formation!" Sieg looked a bit awkward as he feared that the young duke of the Tulip Family would get angry.

However, Rody was not unhappy at all. Instead, he smiled and asked, "Commander Sieg, why do they have such strange curved swords in their hands? If I remember correctly, a horseman would

hold a sword in addition to the bow and the lance!”

Sieg gave a faint smile. “The scimitar is the special weapon of the Central Cavalry! When the Central Cavalry along with the Duke of the Tulip Family conquered the Northwest, they got a bad beating from the enemy's scimitar. The Duke found their scimitars very effective and much more useful than our lance and decided to imitate them. That is why the scimitar became the standard equipment of our cavalry! It is a tradition of our Central Cavalry!”

Rody jumped down and stood in front of the majestic formation of the army with a strange expression.

This is the real ‘Lightning God’s Whip’. This is the invincible elite armored cavalry of the Empire that he had read about in history.

Rody suddenly turned to Sieg and bowed deeply. His voice was trembling with excitement.

“Your Excellency Sieg, I want to thank you for retaining the hope of the Empire.”

Chapter 61: A Curious Coincidence

When he left the Wolves Fang Division's camp, Rody was free of worries. After bidding farewell to Commander Gordon, he rode his horse slowly on the main street. Gordon, on the other hand, took his men back to the Imperial Palace.

As he wore the uniform of a noble warrior and had the handsome face of the Tulip Family, Rody attracted a lot of attention on the streets. Even the patrol soldiers who passed by saluted him.

The streets of the Imperial Capital were no longer busy like before. Even the pubs had fewer people. Rody suddenly felt tired and bored so, he decided to enter a nearby pub by the roadside.

Tomorrow, he would be on the battlefield. After all, he was just a boy that had recently come of age. He also knew that it was a trap prepared by His Majesty. He obviously knew about the situation in the Northwest and he also knew about the foreigner, Reuenthal's craftiness, and cruelty. However, Rody could not avoid this confrontation and could only be pushed forward by fate.

The business in the pub was not good. Nevertheless, as it was located in the Imperial Capital which was also the continent's most prosperous city, there were still some guests. The guests came in groups of twos and threes and were whispering to one another. Rody listened carefully and found that they were talking about the war in the Northwest.

It was evident yesterday in the audience hall, His Majesty the Emperor allowed the officer who came from the Northwest to publicly speak about their military defeat. The bad news had then spread from the palace to the public like wildfire.

Of course, it was quite evident that the things they were discussing were mostly rumors. Much of their 'most reliable news' came from someone's relative who eavesdropped on a noble. Often, when someone from a table mentioned the phrase 'most

reliable news', he or she would immediately attract the attention of others nearby. The information was usually already altered beyond recognition.

There were some people who claimed that the news of the Empire's defeat was false as the Empire had 200,000 elite troops stationed in the Northwest. It was impossible for the Empire to be defeated by foreigners. There were also those who claimed that the 200,000 troops in the Northwest were completely annihilated. The heads of the dead soldiers were collected by Devil Reuenthal and were piled up to form a tower about 10 meters tall. The person who said this claimed that his relative from the Northwest personally witnessed it. There were even people exaggerating and saying that in a few days, the foreigners would arrive at the Imperial Capital.

Rody did not know whether to laugh or cry when he heard that. The public was easily deceived. Whether the news was true or false, the recession of the market and the dejected feelings of the public were definitely true.

The shrines in the Imperial Capital also became more crowded. It appeared that even those who did not have strong faith suddenly became pious and prayed to the Almighty God to bless the Radiant Empire. They prayed that they would be able to defeat the foreigners and defend the people of God. The huge donation box in the religious temple was quickly filled with money by those who wanted to express their piousness to God.

Rody felt somewhat troubled when he saw the confused civilians. If it were him a few months ago, he would join them and undoubtedly feel confused as well as fearful. However, at that moment, he was more aware of the situation than those civilians. At the same time, he was also having greater pressure. Which of the two would be a better feeling in the end?

Rody drank a mouthful of wine. The low quality and bitter wine from the ordinary pub made him choke and cough. He had never entered such a place before as he used to be a poor boy who did not

have money for pubs.

How could a person drink this? I really don't understand why so many people like to drink beer! This drink is spicy and bitter. What is so delicious about it? Rody was still just a young person at heart. He left a gold coin on the table and walked out of the pub. He was completely unaware of the wary looks he received from the other guests behind him.

“That guy seems to be a nobleman.... He also seems like a warrior.”

“Hmph! You are wrong. He looks like an officer! Did you not see that he was wearing the badge of the Central Cavalry?”

“Ah, the sorrow of the Empire. Instead of fighting to defend their homeland, these soldiers actually came out to drink.”

Rody felt bitter and irritated when he heard those words.

Why? Why must I assume all the responsibility?

Rody jumped on his horse and whipped it to make it run quickly. Not only did the nearby patrols not obstruct him but when they saw the badge on Rody's chest, they even gave way to him.

Where can I relax?

Immediately, Rody thought of Nicole. He thought of Nicole's charming face and gentle eyes. He felt a kind of sweetness in his heart. However, he immediately banished the thought of seeing Nicole. He did not want to tell Nicole about what Andy said because he did not want to make Nicole worry. After all, even if he told Nicole, she would not be able to change anything.

While his mind was in turmoil, the horse was still running. He did not know whether it was by accident or by his own subconscious mind controlling the direction of the horse, but when he raised his head he found himself looking at a familiar building.

The beauties in red embroidery and the music coming from inside made Rody surprised for a moment.

Isn't this the prostitute den that I visited before? Speaking of which, it was when I came here with Bayan and the other guys to have fun and ended up fighting and injuring the diplomatic envoy of the Great Moon Kingdom. Due to this, I was summoned by His Majesty and thereafter, given this heavy burden!

Rody stood frozen for a few minutes. He coincidentally remembered the face of a beautiful but indifferent person. He alighted from his horse and walked in with big strides.

Madam Sophie immediately came out to greet him. This place was visited by all kinds of people, from rich merchants to nobles who were allowed to leave the royal palace. Sophie had long heard that the playboy was already granted the title of 'Duke' by His Majesty the Emperor. As a result, she came out to serve him with double the enthusiasm. However, Rody did not allow her to speak and simply said, "I want to see Miss Myka."

Madam Sophie was someone who was very good at reading people's mood. She noticed that Rody was in a bad mood and did not dare to ask. She led Rody towards the room which Rody and the others used the last time they were here. When Rody reached the top of the stairs, he suddenly stopped moving. He was not willing to meet Myka in that place.

In his mind, he never thought of Myka as a prostitute. The day he saw Myka, he was given the impression of an indifferent and magnanimous beauty. In his opinion, she was different from the other prostitutes.

Rody stopped and said, "Take me directly to her room."

Madam Sophie was stunned for a moment. She thought that every time he was here, the Young Master would pull out a new trick. Just as soon as she was about to say something, Rody gave her a sharp look. She was frightened and immediately closed her

mouth. After that, she quickly walked in front to lead the way.

The Duke of the Tulip Family. Just these words were enough to crush Madam Sophie to death.

Rody felt satisfied and followed her from behind. A malicious feeling of pleasure grew in his heart.

Power does feel really good.

Chapter 62: Farewell Myka

The moment Rody walked up to the door, Madam Sophie deliberately slowed down behind him and quietly left.

When Rody opened the door, he saw Myka's figure.

Myka was sitting upright in front of a mirror. Her graceful back was facing Rody. Her beautiful hair was like satin and it hung loosely on her back. She was busy combing her hair with a white jade comb. Even then, her movements were so elegant it was like a dance.

For a split second, Rody was astonished.

A soft sigh was heard. Hearing the footsteps, Myka did not turn around and just spoke indifferently, "You're here again?"

Rody's mouth dropped open. He then gave a wry smile and asked, "How did you know it was me?"

Myka turned around. Her tender face still showed a faint indifference. She took a quick glance at Rody and smiled. Even though she smiled, the smile was cold and detached.

"Don't you know, I have a special skill? I can remember a person's footsteps. After listening to a person's footsteps once, I will be able to recognize that person by his footsteps."

After saying that, Myka resumed combing her hair. Rody stepped forward and tried to say something. However, he did not know what to say to this indifferent beauty. In fact, he did not even know why he decided to visit Myka at that moment.

Perhaps it was because Myka was among the few people who knew that he was an impostor. A person would always subconsciously have an unknown but intimate relationship with someone who knew their biggest secret.

Fortunately, Myka soon finished combing her hair and she stood

up gently. At this point, Rody realized that Myka was only wearing a thin plain silk robe. She also did not wear any make-up.

“Sorry, I just got out of bed and haven’t dressed myself up.” Myka smiled as she showed a rare blush.

With that shallow and simple smile, she no longer looked indifferent. It was as if spring had arrived to melt the snow and there was a sudden blooming of spring flowers. Rody’s heart jumped. He then took a deep breath and tried to suppress the strange throbbing in his heart.

However, that warm smile was fleeting. When that smile disappeared, Myka’s face showed indifference again.

“Sit down, Your Excellency.” Her voice was soft but her tone was nonchalant and a little mocking. Rody gave a wry smile. He knew that she was laughing at the fact that he was actually an impostor. Thinking of this, Rody started to relax. In the Imperial Capital, Rody had to pretend to be someone else in front of everybody other than Nicole. However, the beauty in front of him knew that he was an impostor. As a result, Rody felt extremely relaxed because he did not need to keep pretending in front of her.

“I am going to leave the Imperial Capital tomorrow,” Rody spoke as he slowly sat down and relaxed.

Myka gave a shallow smile. She rested her chin on her hand and looked at Rody.

“I am going to war in the Northwest,” Rody continued.

Unbeknownst to him, Myka’s hand which was supporting her chin trembled slightly. She gently asked, “Is it going to be very dangerous?”

Rody nodded his head and replied, “Yes, it is very dangerous. I am not afraid but I kind of feel a little preposterous right now. You... you should be able to understand.”

Myka looked at Rody’s eyes and suddenly showed an expression

of gratitude, “Thank you.”

“What?” Rody froze for a moment before he realized that she was thanking him for replacing the real Seth. If it were not for him, the person going to the battlefield would be the real Seth. She was thanking him for going in place of Seth.

Somehow, Rody started to feel angry. His voice also became somewhat hoarse. “You do not have to thank me for him! I... Even though I am an impostor, it is still my duty! I...”

Myka was gazing at Rody and saw his expression change. She suddenly smiled and interrupted him, “No, you misunderstood me.”

“Huh?” Rody stared blankly.

Myka’s smile was so sweet, it was as if flowers were blooming and her eyes became much more gentle. “I thanked you because you are willing to tell me your thoughts. You are treating me as a trusted friend. I was not....” Right at that moment, she pointed outside. Although the door was closed, the voices outside were still audible.

“I was not thanking them,” Myka immediately became gloomy and grief showed in her eyes.

“Do you know, you are the second man I have met who did not treat me as a plaything,” Myka said. “Yesterday, Bayan came. However, he did not dare to treat me badly. He had already taken a fancy to me much earlier. Hmm...” Her tone sounded helpless and troubled. “In fact, the men who have met me, none of them were able to forget me. You guys are different. You guys are different from Bayan and the others.”

“'You guys'... Do you mean me and Seth?” Rody felt a sense of anguish. He himself did not understand why he had such peculiar thoughts. After all, including today, he had only met this woman twice.

“Yes.” Myka slowly stood back up. She turned and retrieved a small bottle from the cabinet then, she went back and sat down. After that, she gave the bottle to Rody.

“This is my personal brew. It is not like the other wine. Usually, I never take it out for others to drink. Why don’t you try it?”

Rody took the bottle. For a moment, he wanted to loudly ask, “Only Seth drank this before?”

However, he decided not to ask and slowly removed the cap. He raised his head and drank a mouthful. When the wine entered his mouth, he felt an unusually strong and rich scent. It had a scent like flowers but it was not entirely the same. Along with the fragrance, it also gave a burning sensation. His tongue felt hot as if it was being burned. When he swallowed it, the burning sensation seemed to go down his throat and enter his stomach.

Myka’s voice gently sounded out, “I am 18 years old now. When I came here, I was only 16 years old.”

“Why?”

Myka gave Rody a profound look and slowly said, “There are a lot of miserable things in this world. As there are a lot, it is not worth talking about them.”

Rody sighed and stopped asking. He took the bottle and drank another mouthful.

“I do not know whether I am considered lucky or unlucky. The day after I arrived, I met Seth. At that time, I was afraid and also felt strange. He did not seem much older than me yet he still came to this kind of place.” Myka smiled. After that, she shook her head and continued, “Fortunately, he was very powerful and took a fancy to me. That was why he spent a lot of money. Madam Sophie did not allow me to do any other thing. My daily task was to dress up and wait for him. As a result, I got to spend my time here well. Sometimes, Seth would come every day and sometimes he would

not come for a few days. He taught me how to play the piano and he taught me how to sing. I would also learn how to dance from the teachers here in order to show him. I was so silly then. I thought that I could be happy in this life; I even forgot my identity. In the end... I am just a prostitute.”

‘Prostitute’. The words that came out of Myka’s mouth sounded cruel. Rody felt his hands tremble and the wine almost spilled.

Chapter 63: Old Man Mark

Myka's eyes were filled with sadness but her voice remained calm.

“One night last year, Seth came to me and played the piano. I danced along for him. After that... he became my first man. He is the only person I have ever slept with. Until now, I still do not know whether I am lucky or unlucky. He protected my body but he has hurt my heart!” Myka suddenly smiled. She glanced at Rody and said, “Do you know why I did not expose you as an impostor?”

“Why?”

Myka gave a faint smile. “I am not so noble like you but in the end, you are you and I am me. Your affairs have got nothing to do with me... Moreover...” Myka's voice gradually became softer. “Now that the real Seth is gone and you are here, the other men would not dare to bully me. If I expose your secret, you will get into trouble. Even when you are gone, the real Seth might not come back. Without anybody to rely on, the other men will bully me... Hmph... Whoever that has more money or higher authority would be able to willfully violate me. Just... just like the others!” Myka gently pointed at the door.

Listening to her last few words, Rody drank the rest of the wine in the bottle. He sighed and looked at Myka but could not say anything.

After some time Rody spoke clearly, “Thank you. You are very honest.”

Myka laughed indifferently.

Rody sighed. “Honestly, I feel very troubled today. Tomorrow, I will need to go out and face the unknown but... I am not really Seth. I am not really the Duke of the Tulip Family.”

Myka looked at Rody gently and said, “I am a woman and I do not

understand war. However, from what I saw that day, your swordsmanship is particularly good. I do not know about other aspects but at the very least, you are better than Seth in this area.”

Rody had already started to feel hot from the wine. He had never drunk so much wine before.

“Really?” Rody stuck out his chest.

Myka laughed lightly and gently looked at Rody’s expression. Her expression then turned strange and she whispered, “You do look like him but your eyes are different. Seth is very smart. His eyes were full of wisdom and sometimes a little bit of cunning. However, you are different. Your eyes look very clean and innocent.”

Myka suddenly stood up and smiled. “Do you want to see me dance?”

“Yes!” Rody blushed. This time, it was not because of the wine.

Myka smiled and slowly walked to the center of the room. She wore a thin silk robe and was barefooted. The hems of the robe exposed her straight and slender ivory-white legs.

Without any music, Myka started to dance.

Her dance was graceful and joyous, unlike her indifferent personality. It was as if she had already forgotten all of her sadness. She was like a spirit that had thrown her entire existence into the dance.

The hem was raised revealing her dexterous, graceful and dazzling legs.

Seeing this, Rody's face took on a peculiar look and he shouted out a poem.

“The hem is gently raised, it's the dance of the monarch!

The sword is ruthless, the beauty dares not dream!”

Myka’s face was filled with a sense of pride.

She was incredibly beautiful. Her beauty was the most attractive part of her but it was also the source of her misfortune.

Myka's dance ended just as suddenly as it started. It was as if it ended right at the crescendo of a song.

When Myka stopped, her body was like a single leaf slowly falling to the ground. Her face looked flushed and her forehead was sweating. Her eyes still bright and lively.

"The poem sounded nice. What did it mean?"

Rody smiled gently.

Myka continued, "It seems to be a poem from a wandering minstrel but something was different... what was it?"

Rody was dumbfounded and felt a bit awkward. How could he say that this strange poem was found in the Sunflower's Treasure which Dandong wrote 200 years ago?

He laughed and replied, "It was just something I suddenly said in excitement."

Myka looked strangely at Rody as she sized him up for a while. In the end, she did not continue to question him.

After the wine and the dance, the depression that Rody felt had disappeared. He stood up and looked at Myka. "Thank you, Miss Myka. I am not good with words but I would like to tell you that I am truly glad to have met you today."

The color on Myka's face changed slightly. "Are you leaving now?"

Rody nodded his head and felt that it would not be right if he did not leave now. However, he did not know why it would not be right.

As he thought of this, he nodded his head again and turned to the door.

"Rody!" Myka suddenly shouted.

“You... Will you come back to see me?” Her voice seemed strange.

“I will.” Rody smiled and spoke firmly, “If I manage to survive and come back from the Northwest, I will definitely visit you again!”

After Rody left the prostitution center, he stood on the streets and stretched himself. He felt like he had regained his normal composure. Getting depressed was unavoidable. After all, he had just come of age and he was still a youngster at heart even though he had superior strength, great determination, tough training and Andy to tutor him.

Having turmoil in his heart was natural especially if it was before undertaking a big task.

Just as Rody was about to get onto his horse, someone held his shoulder.

Rody was surprised. With his current skills, common people should not have been able to sneak up on him. He wanted to grab the hand and move away by reflex.

Suddenly, he felt the hand move away. Rody turned around and saw an old man with a wrinkled face. The old man had a thoughtful expression.

“Mark! You!”

“Not bad, boy. To even come to this kind of pla ... You must have really mastered Young Master Seth's habits.” Mark gave a supercilious look.

Now that Mark was alone with him, Mark was definitely not going to be the honest groom that listened to orders. Rody would never forget Mark's identity. He was a person who had lived for over 200 years like a monster!

“You... How did you know that I was here?” Rody subconsciously looked at the door of the prostitute center and blushed.

“Hmph,” Mark replied lightly. “Things that I want to know about, I can easily find out! Come with me!” After he finished speaking, he grabbed Rody’s arm and pulled him.

“Where are we going? Are we going home? Did Nicole ask you to look for me?”

“No! I came to you because of something else!” Mark’s tone became serious.

Rody followed Mark involuntarily. Although Rody was skilled and strong, he was not able to resist.

“Where are we going?”

Mark suddenly stopped and looked at Rody. His eyes were extremely serious. "Boy, do you think your mishmash martial arts can help you survive in the Northwest? Let me tell you that the Northwest Legion had a few Grade 4 commanders. What happened? Didn't their heads all fly at the hands of Reuenthal? I know that Miss Nicole cares about you. That is why if you die, that girl will be sad. That is not in accordance with my plan. That is why I, your 'great-great grandfather' will teach you a unique skill to help you survive!”

After speaking, Mark no longer looked back and continued to drag Rody into a small path.

'Great-great grandfather'? What kind of fucking title are you giving yourself?

Rody angrily thought to himself. Shit. This old man has lived for over 200 years. Doesn't that mean that he is technically older than my great-great grandfather?

Chapter 64: Life-Saving Treasure

Old Mark was abnormally familiar with the roads in the Imperial Capital. He took Rody through a path that had very few people and they soon reached the southern gate of the Imperial Capital.

Rody stared at the nearby buildings with wide eyes. Without a doubt, they were at the southern gate of the Imperial Capital. A carriage, moving at normal speed would take an estimated half an hour to reach it from the prostitution den. However, Rody was sure that Old Mark did not take that long to walk to the gate.

“I have driven carriages for decades,” Old Mark lightly spoke when he saw that Rody was surprised. “I am also very familiar with the roads in the Imperial Capital. The path we took earlier was almost a straight path to the southern gate.”

Rody secretly muttered to himself.

Nonsense. You have lived here for over 200 years. Of course, you would be familiar with the roads here!

Old Mark did not continue to speak and led Rody into a small alley. After that, he stood in front of a medium-sized residence.

“What is this place?”

Old Mark did not reply but he pushed the door open and walked in with long strides. Rody followed him.

The residence was not small. It had two courtyards but the courtyards looked deserted. It looked like not many people usually visited the place. After both of them entered the innermost courtyard, Old Mark closed the door and turned around.

“Give me your sword.”

“Huh?” Although things felt suspicious, Rody gave his sword to Old Mark. He knew there was no point trying to oppose that man who had unfathomable strength.

Old Mark took the sword, drew it out and carefully looked at it before sighing, "It really is the Master's lightsaber! Where did you get it from?"

Rody was about to speak when Andy cried out in his mind, "Do not tell him about my existence!"

"I found it in the laboratory at home. It should be one of the Great Dandong's relics," Rody spoke while remaining calm. He had been posing as Seth for a while dealing with others and thus, needed to lie a lot. As a result, he became more proficient at lying and no longer had the appearance of a clumsy child when he did.

Old Mark sighed. He gave the sword back to Rody and frowned. "This sword is powerful but do you know how to use it?"

"I roughly know how to use it." Rody nodded. He lied again when he saw Old Mark's puzzled face, "In the laboratory at home, I found one of the Great Dandong's notes."

"Good! Show me how to use it."

Rody understood that Old Mark wanted to test his strength. Rody took a deep breath and slowly gathered his strength from his body into his arms. He then felt the heat slowly flowing out of his arms and into the lightsaber. Sure enough, the gem on the hilt of the sword lit up and a cool, brilliant ray of light emerged from the sword.

"Hmph!" Rody did not expect Old Mark to be dissatisfied. "You fool! Are you this slow every time you use the sword? Every moment on the battlefield is dangerous. If enemies confront you, do you think they would wait for you to slowly gather your strength? The moment they see you standing there stupidly, they will immediately hack you into several pieces!"

After he was verbally abused, Rody replied feeling depressed, "I have no choice. The amount of power in my body is still too weak to properly use this sword. You know very well that if one is

unable to gather power, this sword is simply scrap! Even a normal sword will be able to cut it."

Old Mark frowned. He took the sword from Rody's hands and gently swung it without paying much attention to Rody. The lightsaber suddenly gave out a pleasing sound and the gems on the hilt turned bright. The full length of the blade also radiated an extreme brightness.

"Look!" Old Mark shouted. He flicked his wrist and the sword in his hands swung back. When the sword was swung, it gave out a distinct sound. Before the sound ended, Old Mark's body floated. It was as if he became extremely light. How he moved was not clear. The only thing that could be seen was light moving downwards.

A soft thud was heard as a limestone table was sliced into two and both sides slowly fell to the ground.

Rody watched the scene very carefully and noticed that before the lightsaber actually touched the table, the faint light from the blade of the sword had easily sliced the limestone table into two halves.

Rody sighed.

This 200-year-old man has frightening strength!

Old Mark returned the sword to Rody and spoke seriously, "My fighting style relies on speed and is not a style that can be learned by someone with a body build like yours. However, I want you to understand that the lightsaber's main strength is not its sharpness but its ability to amplify the amount of power used by the body. Although the amount of power in your body is still too weak, as long as you can understand this and cleverly use the power in your body, this sword can really be useful."

Rody gave him a condescending look and could not help but whisper, "Useless advice."

Old Mark replied lightly, "So, I suggest you keep the lightsaber

and bring another slightly better sword with you. The lightsaber can only be used during an emergency. After all, you are currently too weak. Even though you have learned Master Autumn's Half Moon Slash, you become weaker or run out of energy every time you use it. That is not right. On the battlefield, each time you cut down a few enemies, more will appear to attack you. You cannot just lie down and wait to be killed."

"In that case, what do you think I should do? Can you teach me how to use your so called 'power'?"

"Do you think it is that easy?" Old Mark sneered. "I spent 10 years trying to comprehend fighting energy. I spent another 10 years learning how to control it. After that, I spent another 10 years trying to comprehend this 'power'! Normally, this 'power' is sublimated from a higher level of fighting energy! Right now, you do not even have fighting energy. Do you think 'power' is something that will just fall from the sky? It is like a pot of boiling water. The water needs to be boiled to be turned into steam but right now, you are just an empty kettle!"

Having said that, Old Mark took out a parchment he kept near his arm and gave it to Rody. "This is a training method for fighting energy. It suits your current strength. Normally, you would need to wait until you become a Grade 5 warrior before you can learn this but you were damn lucky! Master Autumn gave you a bit of power and now you will end up progressing much faster than others!"

Rody's eyes turned bright. He was always someone who liked martial arts. He immediately picked up the parchment and noticed that the first line read, 'Tulip's Bloom'.

"This is..." Rody blurted out.

"This is the Tulip Family's training method for obtaining fighting energy!" Old Mark smiled triumphantly. "I have been with the Tulip Family for over 200 years now. I used this method

when I started training to gain fighting energy.”

“Did you steal it?” Rody stared at him.

“Do you want to learn it?” Old Mark stared back.

Rody thought to himself as he kept the parchment.

Since I am fighting for the Tulip Family, I guess that it is not wrong to learn how to use fighting energy from them? Either way, the Tulip Family’s current generation, that bastard Seth, is definitely not willing to learn it. With his current strength, even if he wants to, it is unlikely that he will be able to. Grade 5 warrior? That playboy will never reach Grade 5 in this life!

Rody carefully put away the parchment and suddenly asked, “Why do you not do what Master Autumn did, directly give me a bit of power? Wouldn’t I become much stronger?”

Old Mark immediately became so furious that he felt like kicking Rody. He shouted, “Do you think that ‘power’ is something that is sold on the streets?! Let me tell you, that little bit of power Master Autumn gave you is something only a highly trained master can acquire after training for several years! I really do not know what was wrong with Master Autumn! To think that he just gave you his hard-earned power without any condition!”

Rody immediately shut his mouth. He knew that there was a difference between the old monster in front of him and the skeleton, Andy. At most, Andy would only curse when he was angry plus he would not be able to cause him any physical harm. However, the same could not be said for this old monster. If Old Mark got annoyed, he would be able to harm Rody.

Old Mark gradually calmed down. He thought for a moment and took out a small transparent crystal that was about a third of the size of an egg. This time, his face was unusually serious.

“Take this with you and use it if you encounter a critical situation, I mean fatal situation. You hold this in your palm and

exert your strength on this crystal. Once you do so, the crystal will be crushed. For a 2-hour period, your stamina will increase exponentially and you will also have greater strength! Naturally, your 'power' will not improve. It just allows you to have unlimited stamina. For example, although the Half Moon Slash is useful, based on your own strength you can only use it once. However, once you break the crystal, you will be able to use the same tactic without worrying about strength running out for a 2-hour period!"

"So good!" Rody was surprised.

Unlimited Half Moon Slash! What kind of power is that? Ah!

When Rody used the Half Moon Slash previously, he was able to defeat the Grade 4 swordsman, Randt and the Great Moon Kingdom's Rondo. If he could within the 2-hour period, use that tactic as many times as he wanted, then it would mean that his strength had multiplied many folds!

Rody felt his heart beat very fast. He was in a daze and was unable to say anything.

Old Mark sighed and said, "You must remember, you only have two hours! This has side effects! After two hours, you will be finished! You will feel like you have exhausted your whole body and you will not be able to even lift a finger. This will last for a few days. In other words, this is something that will make you overuse your energy! It can only be used in critical situations and the problems must be solved within two hours! Otherwise, you will be dead!"

Old Mark then looked dejected and said, "This is something that Dandong personally made. There were only three of it. When I was in the war, to protect the Duke, I had to use one piece. Now, there are only two left. I cannot give you both so you have to make good use of this one!"

Rody was unable to calm down even after he was brought out of the residence by Old Mark. His heart was filled with awe, surprise,

curiosity, and excitement.

This thing that Dandong left behind is too amazing! What warrior would not want his strength to increase a lot in a short while? Even if it is only temporary, it is still good!

With that in mind, Rody gave Old Mark a salute and earnestly said, “I know that this is very valuable and I will use it properly... Also... thank you, Mister Mark!”

Old Mark was in a good mood. He waved his hands and was about to say something like, “I am an old man.” However, Rody interrupted and his statement almost made Old Mark explode.

“Mister Mark, you have worked for the Tulip Family for 200 years and must have saved a lot of money! Did you personally buy this residence? I guess no one in the family actually knows about this! In the Imperial Capital, this kind of residence is not cheap... Aargh!”

Old Mark was furious. When Rody was walking out the door, Old Mark took advantage of the timing to kick him in the ass.

Chapter 65: Glorious Expedition

That morning, the feelings of defeat in the Imperial Capital were completely swept away.

All the citizens in the Imperial Capital rushed to the streets because they learned that the mighty Tulip Family was finally dispatched that morning.

The mighty, undefeated and ever glorious Duke of the Tulip Family would lead the Empire's most powerful army, the 'Lightning God's Whip' of the Central Cavalry Regiment to the battlefield in Northwest. As for the number of troops, there were those who said that there were 50,000 while some claimed there were 80,000. Some of the citizens even heard that the duke led a force of 100,000 troops!

The hearts of all those people held the same desire. They wanted His Excellency, the Duke of the Tulip Family, to lead the Empire's warriors to the Northwest and teach the foreign barbarians a lesson.

There were also many young girls who heard that His Excellency was a talented and handsome young man. That was more attractive to them than his glory from being the 'God of War'.

As a result, that morning tens of thousands of people crowded the streets all the way up to the northern gate of the Imperial Capital. Countless people stretched their necks to see how extraordinary and powerful were the Empire's 'God of War' as well as their most elite army, the 'Lightning God's Whip'. Countless young girls also came hoping to see the man of their dreams, who supposedly looked like the 'Sun God'.

It was an unfortunate day for the people working for public security as all 15,000 of them had to cancel their vacation. They had to block both sides of the main road by forming human barricades and had to prevent the citizens from rushing past them.

That meant that they also had to endure the overwhelming force of the crowd. However, in the eyes of the common citizens, the public security was extremely detestable for blocking their view of the hero.

Shit! They aren't even the ones who are going to the Northwest to fight those barbarians! They only know how to stay in the Imperial Capital to bully common citizens like us.

There were countless people trying to rush past the human barricades and they ended up coming into conflict with the security soldiers.

According to statistics, every security soldier on duty was attacked by the crowd that day. Though, it is important to note that the statistics were incomplete. The average data showed that each personnel suffered from being pelted by two rotten eggs and one and a half tomatoes (as tomatoes were more expensive than eggs). Their bodies had about three to five bruises each. The soldiers also suffered an average of two kicks each on their buttocks. Even the Supreme Commander of the Public Security, Frey, got his face scratched by two enthusiastic women while they were trying to get a look at their dream hero.

When the sound of hooves was heard at the end of the street and the banner that was like a flame was raised, the crowd burst into an earthshaking cheer! The people on both sides of the road immediately started to toss flowers. According to statistics, the flower shops in the Imperial Capital sold 17 times more flowers than usual on that day! Consequently, all of the flowers were sold out. Even flowers like roses and lilies were sold out and the prices of flowers used for funerals were speculated to be at an astronomical height at that time! It was also said that, on that day, a marquis wanted to buy flowers for his secret lover but could not find a single flower throughout the city. In the end, the marquis had to spend 10 gold coins to buy a bunch of *polygonum orientale* flowers as a gift for his beau.

In accordance with the decree of His Majesty the Emperor, the Central Cavalry Regiment army left the city fully equipped. Although they could have left quietly using a different gate that headed straight to the north, His Majesty wanted to take the opportunity to assure the people in the Imperial Capital. He specifically ordered them to wear their best equipment and head from the west of the city to the north, passing through half the city. This was to display the might of the Empire and restore the confidence of the people!

Rody did not think highly of that order. In his opinion, the faster they could depart and assist in the war in the Northwest, the better. However, he had to spend half the morning parading around the Imperial Capital just for the people to see them. In addition to that, his soldiers also had to wear their heaviest armor which he thought was a waste of effort.

Nevertheless, when he walked through the streets and heard the deafening cheers from the crowd on both sides, he could not help but believe that there might have been a certain logic behind the Emperor's orders. The moment the public started to cheer, they once again re-established their confidence in the Empire and believed that the Empire was strong and could not be defeated.

The crowd on both sides waved as they continued to knock down the human barricades formed by the public security soldiers. The cheering of countless people filled the skies of the Imperial Capital. The warriors felt proud and smiled as the petals scattered all over them. They immediately sat ramrod straight on their horses' backs.

Rody suddenly gave an order that he never expected himself to give, "Let the troops advance at a slower pace. Pass down the order."

From a distant location, Nicole watched the parade which was moving slowly from atop a tower. She looked at the silver armored Rody and quietly prayed. Behind her was the driver, Old Mark. He

looked at Nicole and the scene outside in disdain and quietly laughed. "Sigh, youngsters these days..."

Rody did not realize at that moment, someone else was smiling and watching him from the upper floor window of a building beside the street.

"Haha! It seems like that boy did a good job! I did not expect the duke title to suit him so well. This is really a huge load off my mind." The person gave a strange smile. His long golden hair blocked one of his eyes which were blue like the color of lake water. If Rody had actually seen the person, he would have definitely cried out in alarm. It was the original playboy who was supposed to have run overseas; the real successor of the Tulip Family, Seth!

Seth sighed and raised a silver bottle of wine to pour a mouthful of wine into his mouth. After that, he said to himself, "Alright, I am going to let that guy be responsible for fighting and killing in the war. I don't want to be involved... Haha, that day I deliberately told him that I was going overseas. Ultimately, that idiot really told my sister... Ah, after all, he is not as smart and intelligent as me. It is so funny. I just intentionally said a few words and then casually went around the pier. In the end, my sister really sent people to chase me by sea..."

Seth once again looked down at 'himself' on horseback, fully armed and sighed.. "Boy, you better do well. Although I am not a filial son, you must not ruin my father's reputation."

At that moment, Rody and his army had already paraded through most of the Imperial Capital, enjoying the cheering which could be heard through the northern gate. Rody looked at the soldiers on the gate tower. They saluted his army. Rody could not help but sigh. He did not expect the feeling of superiority to be so nice!

At the same time, without his knowledge, Emperor Abbas XI was also quietly watching Rody from the castle. Unlike the others,

Emperor Abbas XI watched him with complicated feelings.

“Hmph!” Emperor Abbas XI looked at the army and sneered. “They all say that I am an incapable ruler. They all say that I am not equal to my late grandfather, Emperor Abbas the Great. I want to be a mighty emperor too! However, even if I want to become mighty like Emperor Abbas the Great, I do not have Dandong to help me. Where is my Dandong? My ancestor had Dandong the Great and the Duke of the Tulip Family. One was an academician while the other was a martial arts expert. I only have the Duke of the Tulip Family and furthermore, he is just a child who came of age not long ago! If I do not rely on myself, who else can I rely on?”

Chapter 66: Life and Death Look Alike

As soon as Rody was [10 li](#) away from the Imperial Capital, he ordered the whole army wait for further instructions. He then sent a messenger and asked for the presence of Deputy Commander Sieg and Commander Gordon.

Before the expedition, Rody deliberately requested Emperor Abbas XI to order a high-ranking Imperial Guard commander to follow him as he was still young and had no experience. He hoped that His Majesty would send someone who was familiar with battle formations. Naturally, it was something Nicole suggested.

Emperor Abbas XI was happy to approve and immediately ordered Commander Gordon to follow the army to the Northwest. Commander Gordon also brought along 2,000 of the Imperial Guards with him because Emperor Abbas XI could not depend entirely on the young duke. Additionally, His Majesty had never heard of Deputy Commander Sieg so he wanted to send someone whom he could trust.

“Commander Sieg, I have an idea that I need to discuss!” Rody carefully declared his thoughts.

“Your Excellency!” Sieg gave a faint smile and replied, “You are now the supreme commander. If you have any orders, you just need to say it.”

Rody gave Gordon a glance. Gordon merely smiled quietly and nodded.

Rody took a deep breath and expressed his thoughts, “I have decided to divide the Wolves Fang Army into two. Commander Gordon will lead 10,000 Wolves Fang cavalymen along with his 2,000 Imperial Guards and continue to march in as a group. However, the 10,000 cavalymen will have to give up their horses! Sieg and I will take the remaining 10,000 cavalymen, with each one having two horses! We will take provisions enough for four

days and rush straight to Watt Fortress! According to my calculations, if we do not take any break and just rotate our horses, we will be able to reach the fortress in four days!”

The moment Rody said that Gordon and Sieg felt shocked. Sieg cried out first, "How can this work?" After that, he realized that he lost control of himself and lowered his voice. "Your Excellency, our military strength is limited. I am afraid that if we split up... we will not be able to cope!"

Rody gave a long sigh and looked at Sieg. He then said, "Commander Sieg, do you think 20,000 soldiers are enough to reinforce the Northwest Legion? There are less than 100,000 soldiers left from the defeated Northwest Legion. If we take into account those who were injured and those who have lost their combat capabilities, I am afraid we only still have about 60,000 soldiers. Can these 60,000 soldiers of a defeated army fight against 180,000 soldiers of the Great Moon Kingdom? Even if we were to add in our 20,000 soldiers, will it be enough?"

“...”

Sieg was silent for a while before he softly replied, “No, we won’t be able to win. Unless we bring 50,000 soldiers with us, I will not dare to fight them.”

“That’s right!” Rody sighed. “I thought of this the entire night before I understood our situation...” At that time, Andy cried out in his mind, “Bullshit! If I did not teach you, could you have thought of this?”

Rody ignored Andy and continued, “We cannot defeat them anyway. That is why with this small force, we can only play the role of increasing morale! As long as our Tulip Family's banner is up, I believe that the morale of the Northwest Army will stabilize! The biggest problem with the Northwest Legion now is not that they cannot win but rather they are too afraid to fight! They still have about 100,000 soldiers! In the previous battle, the 200,000

soldiers were defeated by the enemy's army of 80,000. Now, we have less than 100,000 soldiers left while the enemy has gathered an army of 180,000. The Northwest Legion has lost its morale. We are here to give them morale and not troops. As long as there are reinforcements, even if it is only 5,000 soldiers, the Northwest Legion will know that more reinforcements will come! They will know that there is hope and become more spirited!”

Rody looked at Sieg and Gordon. Noticing that they did not speak he spoke again, “Of course, even if the morale of the Northwest Legion becomes stable, it is still unlikely that we would be able to defeat or even repel the Great Moon Kingdom. Therefore, my plan is to hold out! As long as the Northwest Legion is motivated, even if we cannot fight back against the enemy, we will still be able to defend the fortress!”

Sieg frowned and asked, “Defending is enough?”

Rody looked at him and knew that an honest soldier like him would not understand political affairs. Rody, himself, would not have understood politics if it were not for Nicole who explained it to him.

“Commander Sieg, let me tell you, His Majesty the Emperor does not really intend to fight the Great Moon Kingdom! We cannot afford to fight them! With the Northwest Legion half destroyed, we can only temporarily concede. The Southern Legion is too far away and will take two to three months to reach here if they are mobilized! As for the Northern Legion, if they are mobilized, we would be vulnerable to the attacks of the Roland Continent.”

Those last few words were not very appropriate but Rody had no choice. Those were the only words Andy taught him the night before. All he could do was repeat them.

Rody sighed and continued, “Fortunately, the Great Moon Kingdom also cannot afford to fight us. Right now, they are just consolidating their victories. I don't like it but I have to admit they

have already won the war! Destroying the Northwest Legion is something that will be beneficial to them but they do not need to. As long as they can guarantee victory, they will be in a favorable position when they enter into negotiation with the Empire in the future.”

Rody’s speech gradually changed direction from a military problem to a political one. That was something Sieg could not understand. Even Gordon, who was often in the Imperial Palace only understood half of it.

“That is why our mission is to defend! We cannot let the Empire be defeated anymore! We must prevent this situation from deteriorating by immobilizing the army of the Great Moon Kingdom at Watt Fortress! The Great Moon Kingdom are foreigners living on the grasslands. They cannot afford to fight long and do not have the strength for prolonged battles! When the time comes, they will have to retreat! This way, the Empire will not have to be so passive during negotiations.”

After Rody voiced his opinions, Gordon and Sieg had nothing left to say.

They followed Rody’s orders and divided the Wolves Fang Army into two groups. Sieg ordered all of those in one of the groups to dismount and give up their horses. The young soldiers were reluctant to part with their horses but the Wolves Fang Army had strict rules so no one said anything.

Rody sighed and ordered the other 10,000 soldiers to take their own rations of dry goods and remove their heavy armor. They all then lined up and prepared to depart.

Just before departing, Rody pulled Gordon over and carefully told him, “Commander Gordon, there are two things I need you to help me with! The first one is to lead the remaining 12,000 soldiers. They must move as fast as possible! When you pass by any garrison, I want you to requisite their horses. I will give you the

command token which His Majesty gave me! If the garrison does not comply, show this to them. If they still do not comply, kill them! After obtaining their horses, you are to speed up and catch up with us. I understand that this is different from the plan I told you earlier but it is better to be safe than sorry. In case something happens, I can count on your earlier reinforcement.”

Gordon laughed as he took the command token. “Do not worry, Young Master Seth. I probably won’t even need to use this command token. If the Royal Guards want horses, the defenders will have to give us horses. No one dares to say 'no' especially when they see us in the Royal Guards' armor.”

Rody smiled and said, “As for the second thing, you must remember carefully! In the supply carriage, I kept a box with my family’s insignia. It is very easy to find. If... and I really mean if! If I meet with an accident... remember, and this must be ascertained by you, if I encounter any mishaps and I am killed in battle, I want you to take that box and burn everything in it!”

“Huh?” Gordon was stunned. “What is inside that box?”

Rody gave a strange smile and said, “Nothing special. Just a skeleton. Remember, this is a military order!”

After Rody had finished speaking, he turned his horse around and gave the army the order to march.

The skeleton in his mind was in a rage.

“Shit! Kid, you are too vicious!”

Rody spoke lightly without changing his facial expression, “In that case, you better remember Andy, if I survive, you will survive! If I die, you will die! So, you better stop playing tricks and help me wholeheartedly! Haha...”

He whipped his horse as he spoke. A mighty cavalry of 10,000 rode towards the Northwest with the sun on their backs.

li, 里, also known as the Chinese mile, is a traditional Chinese

unit of distance. The li has varied considerably over time but was usually about a third as long as the English mile and now has a standardized length of a half-kilometer (500 meters or 1,640 feet).

Chapter 67: The Village

It was evening and a few crows on the trees cawed. The trees were planted on both sides of the road. Suddenly, the crows looked up to see dust gathering in the distance. The earth shook and the sound of galloping horses broke the silence of the evening. The crows flapped their wings and hurriedly flew away from the branches.

Rody was no longer wearing the silver armor. Instead, he was wearing a leather armor. Nicole had ordered Randt to bring the leather armor to Rody. It was also something that belonged to the Tulip Family. Many years ago, Nicole's father wore that leather armor in the battlefield. Rody doubted that the leather armor could give him any protection. However, it would be impossible to march quickly if he wore the heavy, metal armor. The leather armor was lighter and more convenient.

Rody's body was soaked in sweat and he felt a burning pain in his thigh. Riding the horses for two consecutive days had caused his legs to tire out.

During the past one and a half days, Rody and the 10,000 elite cavalrymen of the 'Lightning God's Whip' were rushing to their destination. When they felt tired, they rested on their horses' backs and when they were hungry, they ate their dry food and drank while riding. When their horses got tired, they switched their horses and continued to advance forward. At that moment, everyone had changed their horses twice. Each soldier was riding a horse with another spare following from behind. Both horses were extremely exhausted. Some of the horses were even foaming at the mouth. Even though the horses of the Central Cavalry were the best horses in the Empire, they were also unable to endure nearly two days of running without rest.

The soldiers all looked tired but Sieg and the Wolves Fang Army were really worthy of the title 'Lightning God's Whip'. Despite

their exhaustion, the soldiers all still held a strong and sturdy expression. Not a single one of them fell behind or complained. The mighty cavalry continued their journey amid the sound of thundering hooves.

“Your Excellency, the cavalry scouts have returned!” The messenger went to Rody’s side and immediately saluted.

Rody gave Sieg a glance. Sieg nodded and said, “Transmit the order. The whole army is to slow down!”

In the blink of an eye, the messenger conveyed Sieg’s order to the others starting from the front. The cavalry started to slow down without falling into disarray. Evidently, Sieg had trained them well.

The scout reported that they were approaching a village and that the village did not look suspicious. That place was already close to the front lines and apparently, the Great Moon Kingdom’s cavalry would also sometimes appear around the area. However, the village in front did not seem to have encountered the Great Moon Kingdom.

Rody sighed and spoke, “Pass down the orders. We will rest at the village in front for a while. We cannot hurry through our journey. Even if we do not need to rest, the horses will still need to rest.”

Sieg nodded. With his background, he naturally understood that the strength of the horses was important for cavalries.

When night came, the Wolves Fang Army finally reached the village. Rody ordered the army to rest for two hours at a riverbank two miles away from the village. He then took Sieg and 200 soldiers with him to the village.

The village was actually part of the Empire’s territory but because it was in a remote region, a few of the villagers felt surprised and fearful when they saw the army.

The soldiers searched for the village head and found him to be a

simple and honest farmer. When he saw Rody and Sieg, he started to stammer and could barely say anything. Rody once again split up his soldiers with 50 of them guarding the northern entrance. He and Sieg then followed the village head to his home.

The village head said nothing and silently led the way.

The moment Rody entered the simple courtyard, he felt that something was not right. He frowned and looked around. He saw that the village head appeared nonchalant. Beside him was his young daughter, about 15 or 16 years old with a delicate face.

When Rody also saw a pile of unchopped firewood in the courtyard, he immediately understood the situation they were in.

“There are only the two of you here?”

“Yes, Your Excellency,” The village head lowered his head and spoke with a firm voice.

Rody silently went to a corner. Suddenly, he lifted his leg and kicked a wooden cabinet to reveal a big hole in the wall. The sudden movements scared the village head and he went pale. The girl also screamed in fear. Several soldiers beside him rushed forward with their scimitars. They dragged out a young man from the hole. The young man was wearing simple civilian clothing. His face was pale and filled with despair.

“What is the meaning of this?! You are all actually spies!” Sieg’s face also sank with disappointment.

The village head quickly knelt down and begged, “Your Excellency, he is not a spy! He is my son! He is not the Great Moon Kingdom’s spy!”

Rody waved and signaled the soldiers to release the young man. The young man did not look like a warrior, so, Rody was not afraid that he would resist.

“Speak! What is going on here?”

When he saw all the soldiers pulling out their scimitars, the young man quickly shouted loudly, “Your Excellency, my family has nothing to do with this! Just arrest me and take me back... I am... I am someone who escaped from the front line...”

Rody sighed and nodded. “So, he is just a deserter.” Sieg also relaxed a bit but asked, “Are you one of the Northwest Legion?”

“Yes!” The young man nodded his head and glanced at his father. “I was originally based at the Trier Fortress not far from here. We were scattered all over when the fortress was captured by the Great Moon Kingdom. So, I escaped back here...”

“Hmph!” Before Rody could speak, Sieg spoke indifferently, “In that case, do you know the military law?”

“I know,” The young man said with a pale face. “For desertion, death.”

“Don’t!” The girl at the side suddenly screamed. She wanted to rush forward but she was stopped by two soldiers. She wept and spoke, “Do not kill him! Why must you kill him? I have already lost one brother in the war! Do you still want to kill my only remaining brother?!”

Rody was the leader but he was also young and could not help but feel sympathetic. He sighed and said, “This is the military law of the Empire. If everybody violated the law and was not punished, who would fight for the Empire?”

However, the girl was stubborn. With tears in her eyes, she shouted at Rody loudly without fearing him. “Deserters?! My brother never wanted to be a soldier! It was you all who forced him and sent him off to fight! Three months ago, my other brother was forced to fight and in the end, he died in battle! Last month, you came to take him! We do not want to be soldiers! You came here to grab our food! Now you want us to give you our lives!”

“Wait!” Rody stopped the two soldiers who were about to drag

the young man out. He turned around and gloomily looked at the girl before inquiring, “You said your brother was captured and forced to fight in the war?”

Ignoring her own frightened father’s meaningful glance, she stared right into Rody’s eyes and gritted her teeth. “Yes, you all tied him up! My eldest brother refused to be a soldier and then you all beat him up before taking him away! My second brother also refused but you all hit my father and forced him to go with you! Now that the war is over, why won’t you let my brother go home?”

“Is there actually such a thing?!” Rody’s face turned pale and he glanced at Sieg. Sieg wrinkled his brows. He was in the army for most of his life and certainly had heard of such things. In many places, the garrisons often lacked troops. However, they used a normal recruitment process and the recruited soldiers would be paid. But according to the girl’s claims, the officers must have embezzled the recruitment money and used violence to forcefully recruit soldiers. This seemed to be quite common in remote regions.

When Rody saw Sieg’s face, he knew that the girl was not lying. Since Sieg who was most familiar with the army did not say anything, it meant that the girl spoke the truth.

“Let him go,” Rody sighed and was unable to understand his own feelings. He was determined in helping the Northwest Legion to defend his home and country. However, when he saw that the civilians hated the soldiers of the Empire, he had an indescribable feeling.

Sieg wanted to object but, remembering the story that was just related, he also remained silent. The moment that the young man was freed, he immediately rushed over to protect his father and sister.

“Village head, can you prepare us some food? After that, can you also help us to find some food for my soldiers? My soldiers are also

hungry!” Rody no longer had the intention of pursuing the desertion issue with the family. He gave one of his bodyguards a meaningful glance and the soldier immediately took out a few gold coins.

The village head looked surprised at the soldier holding the gold coins and he soon shook his head. “Your Excellency, it is not that I don’t want to... but, really there is nothing left to eat...”

“Why?”

“A few days ago, the army of the Great Moon Kingdom came here. They already took all our food and left. Now, we only have a little bit of food left for ourselves. There is nothing left to give.”

“What?” Rody banged the table and stood up. He then shouted, “Why didn’t you tell us earlier that the Great Moon Kingdom’s army is nearby? How many of them are there? Where are they?”

The village head panicked. His face turned pale and he stammered, unable to speak. The young man then replied, “The last time they came here, there were not many. They only had a few dozen cavalrymen. However, it seemed like they spread out to the nearby villages to look for food.”

“Hmph, why didn't you mention this earlier?" Sieg asked angrily. They were rushing desperately to reach Watt Fortress and join forces with the Northwest Legion without alerting the Great Moon Kingdom. If the Great Moon Kingdom knew that they were there to intercept, Rody, Sieg, and the 10,000 tired soldiers would all be in great danger.

“Is there anything else you have not told us?” Rody signaled for Sieg to sit down and looked at the young man.

The village head’s mouth was wide open but he did not say anything. The young man’s face was pale and his eyes seemed evasive. Rody sensed something was wrong. Without waiting for him to speak, Sieg warned him in a ruthless manner, “I will not

pursue the fact that you are a deserter since His Excellency has pardoned you. However, if you hide military information and do not report them to our army, that is the same as being a spy!”

The girl gritted her teeth, stood up and loudly said, “They came here two days ago. They took our food as well as a few of our villagers with them. They also left us a message asking us to be their messenger. They told us that if the Empire’s army passed by, we had to burn some straws so that the chimneys would give out smoke as a signal. If we refused, they would kill the villagers they had captured!”

Sieg’s face changed and he quickly ran out the door. Sure enough, a few of the farmhouses had black smoke coming out of their chimneys.

“Where are they? Where is the Great Moon Kingdom’s army?” Rody shouted at the young man. He may have been sympathetic towards the man who was forced to fight in the war and did not pursue him as a deserter. However, what they just did made Rody furious.

The girl was shocked at Rody’s sudden rage. She shrank back and shouted, “They always came from the north! I... I did not burn any straws... After they left, my father also told the others not to help the Great Moon Kingdom but they did not listen to my father... I really did not burn any straws... I really did not.”

Suddenly the sound of a horn came from the north. It was a warning that came from the soldiers guarding the north.

“Some of you stay behind and watch them! If they make any reckless moves, kill them!” Sieg ordered as he rushed back into the courtyard. After that, Rody followed him outside.

Chapter 68: Night Attack

A few soldiers were looking for mangers at a farm for their horses. In the evening, they saw black smoke billowing out of almost all of the chimneys. They assumed that the villagers were cooking and were not too concerned about it.

Meanwhile, the army of the Great Moon Kingdom was quietly approaching. They took off all of the bells that were hung on their horses. They also wrapped the horseshoes with cotton and stuffed the horses' mouths with sticks. This was to reduce the amount of noise made by the horses. The whole army slowly approached the village under the cover of the roadside trees.

When night drew near, one of the Empire's cavalrymen found traces of the enemy from the top of a tree. He only had enough time to utter a cry of alarm before his throat was suddenly pierced by an arrow. He fell from the tree.

However, that cry was enough to warn the others. Without any hesitation, all of the soldiers quickly got on their horses and drew their scimitars. One of the soldiers also immediately sounded the horn.

Rody and Sieg rushed over with their 50 soldiers. However, by the time they reached, only 30 of the initial 50 soldiers who were already there remained. The troop leader led his men as they alternately charged and retreated in the battle. The Great Moon Kingdom had about 1,000 soldiers and they were all cavalrymen. Fortunately, the road in the village was narrow. Although the Great Moon Kingdom had more military strength, they were unable to spread out and charge in the narrow space. The officer of the Central Cavalry took his men to the rear and continually shot arrows while moving. The troop leader skillfully shot down the approaching enemy cavalrymen. These 50 cavalry soldiers were personally selected by Sieg to act as Rody's bodyguards. Whether it was in horsemanship or archery, they were the cream of the crop.

It was to the extent that they were even better than the foreigners who were supposed to be famous for their horsemanship and archery. Although the foreigners managed to kill more than a dozen of the Wolves Fang cavalry, they also ended up losing about 30 soldiers.

As the Great Moon Cavalry approached Rody's men, they suddenly heard a shout, "Shoot!"

Before the leading cavalryman of the Great Moon Kingdom's cavalry could react, he was hit by a few arrows and fell to the ground.

Rody had ordered his men to spread out on both sides of the village's main road. The moment the vanguard of the Great Moon Kingdom entered their range of fire, they were ruthlessly shot at by the archers. As it was dark, the Great Moon Kingdom's army was unable to determine the number of archers shooting at them. About a dozen of the leading vanguards who were shot fell down from their horses. The cavalrymen following from behind could not stop on time. They tripped and fell as well. The momentum of the enemy cavalry immediately dropped.

Without giving them a chance to react, Rody and about 100 of his men calmly shot the second volley of arrows. The cavalry of the Great Moon Kingdom was now unable to determine the military strength of their opponents. They could only cry out in alarm, "They have an ambush! An ambush! "

At that moment, Sieg gave an order. About 100 cavalrymen at the rear threw away their other weapons and rushed forward with their scimitars.

After that, the sound of the horn which signaled the Empire's cavalry charge was heard on both sides of the road. "Kill!"

The two cavalries fiercely clashed in the dark. The sound of shouting, screaming, neighing and metal clashing could be heard. Rody took about a dozen soldiers with him and rushed to the

middle. He held a long scimitar in his hand and fought fiercely. Not a single one of his enemies was his match. The moment he met with an opponent, the opponent would immediately scream and fall off his horse. When Rody raised his scimitar the head of an enemy soldier would soon fly into the sky. Blood sprayed all over Rody's face but Rody did not bother to wipe it off. He merely roared and continued to rush forward alone.

Although the Great Moon Kingdom had many soldiers, their most powerful leader who was with the vanguard earlier was already shot to death by some arrows in the dark. Since then, the common soldiers that Rody met wherever he went, were not his match.

The Great Moon Kingdom was unable to gain an advantage with their superior numbers in the narrow road. Rody's warriors were squeezed tight together with them in the confined space. It was then that Rody's warriors' advantage began to take hold.

The Central Cavalry troops were elites whom Sieg personally trained. They brilliantly executed their battle tactics. The attacks of the cavalymen from the Great Moon Kingdom were often blocked and a scimitar would appear from another side to cut off the cavalier's head.

At the narrow road, the Great Moon Kingdom was forced to fight against the Wolves Fang Army, one-on-one. Their soldiers at the rear could not squeeze through. They could only roar but were unable to do anything else. On the other hand, the Wolves Fang Army had a strong leader in Rody who was also a powerful warrior. Almost every enemy soldier they encountered was hacked and killed. In just a short time, the Wolves Fang platoon of 100 had pushed back the Great Moon Kingdom company of 1,000 men.

At that moment, the cries of an army came from behind Rody. The trampling of the horses caused the earth to shake. All of a sudden, in the dark a voice shouted loudly, "Wolves Fang!"

“Kill!” In the dark, the voices of more than 10,000 people shouted in unison.

“Kill!” When Rody’s bodyguards heard the shouting behind them, they suddenly became more aggressive. More than 100 soldiers roared imposingly. Their attacks with the scimitars apparently became about 30% stronger.

The army from behind, who was originally guarding the village, had finally arrived. The clear sound of their bugles and the trampling of their horses got louder as they approached. The Great Moon Kingdom’s soldiers suddenly shouted, “They have a group of cavalries!”

After that, excluding the few soldiers who were fighting Rody, the rest of the Great Moon Kingdom soldiers turned around and ran away.

After defeating the remaining enemies, Sieg knowing that his troop was too small, did not chase after the runaways. Instead, he ordered his soldiers to station themselves at their original place.

The soldiers lit up their torches and found that the village road was filled with corpses and injured horses. They also found a few seriously injured soldiers from the Great Moon Kingdom who were groaning on the ground.

Of the 200 guards who originally protected Rody, only 100 guards remained. On the other hand, the Great Moon Kingdom troop left behind about 300 corpses.

After the fight, Rody felt his body ache. He could smell the strong stench of blood. His face was full of blood and he felt a burning pain from the wounds he received on his hands.

He looked on the ground and saw that some of the corpses were without arms and legs while some were without heads. Rody suddenly felt his stomach churn. He quickly pushed away two of his soldiers who were supporting him and ran to the front of one of

the houses by the roadside. After that, he leaned against the wall and vomited.

He almost lost consciousness after he vomited out most of his bile. His body was drenched in sweat and he felt a bone piercing coldness from the winds which blew that night.

Sieg slowly approached him and gently held his arms. He asked, “Your Excellency, is this the first time you killed in the battlefield?”

Rody nodded his head. His face was pale as he tried to stand straight.

Sieg sighed and slowly said, “This is nothing. This is usually the case when a person kills others for the first time. The first time I killed someone was when I followed the late Duke. At that time, I pissed myself until I almost had no pants to wear.”

Rody’s face was pale but he still managed to grit his teeth and stand straight. He slowly said, “I know. Don’t worry. I am alright now. I am a warrior! From the time I decided to become a warrior, I knew that this day would come!”

At that moment, more than 10 soldiers brought about 20 villagers forward. The one leading the soldiers was one of Rody’s bodyguards. He was covered in blood and his left arm was injured. Although the injury was wrapped up in a simple bandage, the blood did not stop oozing out of the wound. With a gloomy expression, he spoke loudly, “Your Excellency, these are the people who burned the straws and created the black smoke.”

Sieg’s face turned grave as he looked coldly at the trembling villagers. He then looked at the ground, where more than 100 corpses of his soldiers were neatly arranged. His eyes showed grief and distress. He then looked back at the villagers and ruthlessly ordered, “Execute all of them!”

Chapter 69: Justice

Immediately, there was a large audience of kneeling villagers. The villagers were pale. They were on their knees begging for their lives. Some of them even stained and wet their pants when they saw the bloody corpses on the ground.

“Don’t! Don’t!” A thin and sharp voice clearly pleaded among the crowd. After that, a small silhouette crawled forward, clung onto Rody’s thigh and wept. “Your Excellency, they were all forced! They were all forced to do it!” It was the village head's daughter.

“Forced?” Without waiting for Rody to speak, Sieg immediately shouted, “Just because they were forced to, does it mean that they are not enemy spies? Because of them, I lost 100 of my best comrades! All of them were killed!” Sieg was absolutely furious at that moment. Due to the fierce fight, he lost 100 soldiers from the 200 most elite soldiers he had specially selected. They were from the 20,000 soldiers in the Wolf Fang Army. They were now dead because of the cowardly villagers. The villagers had caused the death of his 100 elite soldiers who had undergone strict training!

“Your Excellency! Your Excellency!” The little girl was so scared that she turned pale but she still clung onto Rody’s thigh. After that, she bowed and repeatedly hit her head on the ground. The impact was loud. Soon, her forehead started to bleed and her face was filled with dirt and tears. She looked extremely miserable.

Rody tried to calm down but his heart was beating violently. He glanced at the 20 villagers on the floor. They were old and young and there were also men as well as women. The villagers all looked fearful. Rody felt sad too.

He was certain that those 20 heads would fall to the ground when he waved his hand. According to the laws of the Empire, collaborating with the enemy and committing treason would cause the whole family to be executed. These villagers had secretly

provided the Great Moon Kingdom Army with information and caused them to lose more than 100 soldiers in a surprise attack. They were unable to get away from being persecuted.

However, they were just civilians! Rody hesitated to order their execution. It was a command that Rody was unable to utter. He continued to watch the crying villagers, young and old, men and women, who were of the lowest rank in the Empire's society. They were pitiful people who worked hard just to obtain 3 meals a day. In fact a few months ago, he was also a civilian like them!

What if this happened to me?

If it was my parents who were captured by the enemy and they used their lives to threaten me...

Rody sighed and dared not continue this line of thought.

For the civilians, the Empire, the emperor, the war, the struggle for the throne were all distant issues and not important. Their own loved ones were far more important!

When he saw Rody's hesitant face, Sieg gritted his teeth and spoke, "Your Excellency! Don't be merciful! They have committed a serious crime! If you do not execute them, how can you lead the soldiers? How can you justify this to the ones who died?"

Rody was startled and looked at the soldiers around him. He saw that his soldiers, especially his 100 bodyguards had a cold expression. The soldiers looked at the kneeling villagers with eyes full of hatred. After all, it was the villagers' secret message that had caused the death of their 100 comrades. That was especially true for his bodyguards who were already holding the hilt of their scimitars as they gnashed their teeth.

"Your Excellency...Your Excellency..." That girl continued to cry at his feet. The blood and the tears on her face had already blended together.

"The law of the Empire states that the whole family of those who

commit treason will be executed!” Sieg spoke loudly.

Rody gritted his teeth. He knew that this time, he could not be compassionate. Whatever the reasons were, they had collaborated with the enemy and caused a big loss to the army. More importantly, they exposed the whereabouts of the army. The consequences of such crimes could only be execution.

Sieg signaled and two soldiers rushed forward to pull the girl away. Rody sighed and was about to wave when the girl suddenly struggled with all her strength and cried out, “Your Excellency, please wait! Wait! I... I have something important to say!”

“What else have you not said?” Sieg asked coldly.

The girl was so afraid that she was trembling. She looked at Rody, bit her lip and said, “I know a path that can lead you to the north. Using this path, you can reach Trier Fortress and save half a day or even a day's worth of time... I... I can show you the way... I beg you, Your Excellency, I beg you don't execute them... They were actually forced!”

Rody looked at her for a moment and then he looked at the audience before speaking coldly. “Separate them based on their houses! Then, drag out the ones who set the fire! As for the others... set them free!”

“Your Excellency!”

Sieg and the captain of the bodyguards exclaimed at the same time.

Sieg looked gloomy and gritted his teeth, “Your Excellency, no matter who they are, those who collaborated with the enemy must be executed! Otherwise, it will not serve as a warning to the others!”

“I know! I know about the laws of the Empire! I am also distressed by the deaths of the soldiers! But... but, have you ever thought that... they are just civilians!”

Rody took a deep breath. “I think that most of the officers here were born as civilians. We are all soldiers! As soldiers of the Empire, it is our responsibility to defend the Empire’s territory! We are supposed to guard their homes and protect the civilians! It is true that they have sinned! They were forced to do so because their loved ones were captured by the Great Moon Kingdom! But why were their loved ones captured in the first place? Why?”

Looking at the audience, Rody continued, “This is our fault! We were not able to defend their homes! The Great Moon Kingdom was allowed to rampage on our territory! This is all our fault! If the army was able to prevent the enemy from entering our territory and protect the homes of the civilians, they would not have been forced to collaborate with the Great Moon Kingdom!”

Nobody replied.

Taking another deep breath, Rody continued slowly, "I know you are not satisfied. I know that you cannot accept that your comrades died like this! However, those who should be punished are not the civilians! To begin with, they should not even have to face the enemy butchers! That was supposed to be done by us! Your hatred should not be directed to these unarmed villagers but those butchers in the Great Moon Kingdom!"

Again, no one spoke.

“Your Excellency...” Sieg clenched his jaw but he did not continue to speak.

Rody did not look at Sieg. He slowly turned to look at the villagers who were kneeling on the ground and said, “I know it was not done voluntarily! I know that you were forced to do it! However, you have still committed treason! You have caused the tragic death of 100 heroic warriors of the Empire! That is why I cannot forgive you...” Rody ruthlessly continued, “Those who set the fire just now, step forward and accept your punishment! Your families will be safe and forgiven!”

For a moment, there was silence. The soldiers were all looking at Rody but no one moved.

Rody was unhappy and he suddenly shouted, “What are you guys doing?! Must you really kill all of them? Were the scimitars of the ‘Lightning God’s Whip’ sharpened to kill civilians?”

The soldiers were startled when they suddenly heard Rody’s shout. They immediately stood up straight.

“Execution squad, listen to the order!” Sieg suddenly shouted. “Carry out the order!”

Finally, the soldiers moved and separated the 20 villagers. After some commotion, 10 people stepped forward and knelt on the ground. The remaining villagers were pulled to the back by the soldiers.

“Were you the ones who set the fire earlier?” Rody mournfully asked.

After a moment of silence, a man who was in the middle replied softly, “I was the one who set the fire.” The other nine also nodded.

“Because of all of you, 100 heroic soldiers of the Empire died a tragic death! I understand that you were forced to do so to ensure the safety of your family! Yet, you have still caused the death of 100 others! You are all people but those 100 soldiers were people as well! You have families but those who died also had families! You all cherished your families but what about the families of those who have died? Won’t they be heartbroken as well?”

The villagers stayed silent. None of the kneeling villagers raised their heads to look at Rody.

Rody’s voice became deeper as he spoke, “I am now going to execute you according to the laws of the Empire. Do you have any last words?”

The 10 villagers lowered their heads in silence. Even the daughter

of the village head did not speak. She only looked at Rody in tears. She also seemed to understand that forgiving their families was already showing mercy beyond the law.

Rody no longer looked at them. He turned around and walked to the back as Sieg coldly signaled the executioners.

The sound of heads being chopped off was soon heard and it was followed by sad crying from a distance. Sieg then walked forward with big strides.

Rody glanced at him and slowly said, “Commander Sieg, I know that you are not contented with this but I believe that you can understand my approach. I can punish the criminals so that the dead may rest in peace. However, I cannot raise a hand against the innocent villagers.”

There was a long silence before Sieg opened his mouth to speak, “Your Excellency, I understand. I will redirect this hatred to the Great Moon Kingdom! They have killed 100 of us! I will kill 1,000... no... 10,000 of them!”

Rody shook his head and lightly said, “Enough. They already know our whereabouts. We cannot stay here any longer! Give an order to immediately set out! Also... that girl. She said that there is a small path! Take her with us. If we can reach Watt Fortress earlier, we will be safer earlier!”

Sieg nodded and signaled the soldiers to bring the girl up.

“What is your name?”

“Jadelina.” The girl bowed. Her voice was still shaking a little.

Rody sternly asked, “Earlier, you mentioned a small path leading to the north. Can this path reach Watt Fortress?”

“It can,” Jadelina spoke softly. She then stopped for a moment. She needed to gather her courage to continue to speak. “This is a path that only my brother and I know. He fled back here from Trier Fortress using this path. Using this path to reach Watt

Fortress can probably save you a day of traveling.”

Sieg carefully asked a few more questions to determine if the path was concealed. Jadelina replied that it was a path that her brother found by chance when he went hunting in the mountains. However, it was a rugged path. It was still suitable for horses to pass by but vehicles would definitely not be able to use it.

“Very good.” Sieg gave Rody a glance. It was good enough if they can pass through on horses. After all, they were not taking a lot of supplies with them.

“Give her a horse. Can you ride?” Rody asked lightly.

“Yes... I can!” Jadelina did not dare to look at Rody. In fact, Rody’s face was still covered in blood. He had not wiped off the bloodstains on his face. It made him look scary.

Soon, the messenger finished conveying the order to set out. At that moment, Jadelina suddenly plucked up her courage and begged Rody, “Your Excellency, could... could you go and save those captured villagers? They...”

“Impossible!” Rody immediately refused. His eyes were cold and detached. “Listen to me, the captured villagers are already dead! The army of the Great Moon Kingdom came out to look for food! Do you think they would share their food with the prisoners? The captured villagers have probably died a long time ago!”

“Boy, do you still think that having power is a pleasant thing?” Andy coldly asked in his mind.

Rody felt depressed to the extent that he could barely breathe. His stomach felt as if it was being crushed by a heavy boulder. “I don’t know... Andy... I found out that there are a lot of things I cannot understand...”

Chapter 70: Before The War

The Watt Fortress was quiet and calm when the first light of dawn broke. Looking at the scene, no one would expect that an episode of horrific killing occurred just the night before. Tens of thousands of people shed their blood and cried miserably there. Now, the reddish looking soil was the only reminder of the battle.

The 'Thorny Flower' banner was still raised but the soldiers who stood on the wall were already tired and at a loss. The army of the Great Moon Kingdom had suddenly attacked the Watt Fortress at midnight and the battle lasted until dawn. After both sides lost thousands of lives, the Great Moon Kingdom finally retreated.

The soldiers on the city wall had not slept at all throughout the night. They gazed frustratingly at the Great Moon Kingdom's camp. At their camp, the fur-coated foreign barbarians with long blades had already begun to gather. "It looks like there will be another day of fierce battle..." Some of the veteran soldiers sighed. They looked at the rising sun as they were unsure if it would be the last time they see it.

The original solid and tall city wall was already in a terrible condition. The mixture of black smoke and red blood stains turned the color of the wall into a horrifying gray. The gate was also destroyed in the previous night's battle. There was now a hole in the gate. Although the soldiers were already using giant pieces of wood to reinforce the gate, the soldiers on top of the wall could see that the enemy had taken out a heavy looking ram. They could not help but feel agitated.

The Northwest Legion's General Reuben stood above the gate. He also fought in the battle last night but he was not feeling exhausted. He had been suffering defeat for the past few days. As a result, he was feeling frustrated. As the Supreme Commander of the Northwest Legion, he had lost a substantial portion of the Empire's territory and many soldiers. In the end, he was besieged

at Watt Fortress. Reuben knew that even if he managed to hold their position until reinforcements arrived, he would still lose his head. The first thing His Majesty the Emperor would do was to execute him, the defeated general.

However, Reuben still struggled to hold on because he could not allow the Northwest Legion to be completely annihilated at the Watt Fortress. As a loyal soldier of the Empire, he would fight to the end. He could not allow the Empire's last line of defense in the Northwest, the Watt Fortress to fall into the hands of the Great Moon Kingdom! He knew that behind him were the Northwest plains. If the Great Moon Kingdom was to capture the Watt Fortress, the entire Northwest plains would be subjected to the oppression of the Great Moon Kingdom!

Morale had already reached rock bottom after their continuous defeats. There were less than 100,000 soldiers left from the original army of 200,000. Reuben was also certain that if he deducted the soldiers who were injured and could not fight, there would be less than 70,000 soldiers left. Reuben also had a sense of fear towards his enemy's supreme commander, Reuenthal. This terrifying opponent used strange tactics and was proficient in long-distance raids. Like a wolf, he was always able to find an opponent's weakness and persistently attacked it.

Frankly speaking, Reuben knew that he was not an outstanding strategist. He was a diligent soldier. He was better at implementing rather than making decisions! During the years he had served under the late Duke of the Tulip Family, Reuben was able to accomplish any order or task given by the Duke.

He completely relied on the commands of the late Duke to fight courageously in those battles. The merits he earned then were accumulated until he ended up in his current position. Naturally, it was also because the Empire lacked talented military personnel after the Duke's death. However, commanding a troop and devising strategies to win battles were not things Reuben was

competent at. It was especially true when he had to fight against the fierce and cunning Reuenthal. In all the battles against him, Reuben was forced to retreat in a completely passive state!

Reuben remembered the times when he served under the Duke. He sighed and touched his partially white beard. He actually did not like to be a supreme commander. He preferred to be a normal commanding officer serving under the duke. At that time, he did not need to think at all. He only needed to execute the Duke's orders. Unlike then, he now needed to discuss with a bunch of commanding officers all day long, trying to figure out his opponent's next move.

Shaking his head, Reuben forced himself to concentrate. In the distance, the Great Moon Kingdom had already gathered up their soldiers. It appeared that a fierce and bloody battle was about to start!

“Hmph, let's see whose weapons are stronger!” Reuben ordered the soldiers who were resting on rotation to return to the wall and prepare to fight.

Fortunately, like the traditional barbarians of the plains, Reuenthal also had his own weakness. He may have been good at field operations but he was not very good at siege battles.

Earlier information stated that Reuenthal had launched a very quick surprise attack to capture Trier Fortress and Blackstone Fortress. With that in mind, Reuben was on high alert to defend against his attacks there.

Sure enough, during the past few days the Great Moon Kingdom applied their usual tactics. Three nights ago the Great Moon Kingdom suddenly gathered thousands of soldiers and launched a surprise attack. They immediately laid siege to the place and caught General Reuben by surprise. His stupid mounted scouts were part of the reason why they were caught by surprise. Four hours before the siege, the scouts reported that the enemy was still

at the Redwood garrison, a strategic location a few hundred li away. However before he knew it, the enemy was at his doorstep. If it was not because of the precautions that General Reuben took after experiencing a few defeats, the enemy would have succeeded.

The past few days, the Great Moon Kingdom had always laid siege to them at night and only harassed them in the morning. It was obviously a method to wear out the mental strength of General Reuben's soldiers and also to make them collapse from the exhaustion.

The cavalries were extremely exhausted but the Northwest Legion were after all, still the Empire's elites. They were unable to defeat Reuenthal on the plains as the foreign cavalries were very fast. However, it was a siege. No matter how powerful the cavalries were, they no longer had the advantage. Sieges were best encountered with infantries.

Reuben ordered the archers to get ready. Then, his only hopes left were the archers. During the surprise attack on Redwood garrison, the Northwest soldiers had abandoned their catapults and other weapons when they retreated. They had also abandoned the catapult stones and fire crossbows. There was no way they could bring those weapons along with them during the chaos in the retreat.

Luckily, General Reuben made what was probably the boldest decision of his life!

When he knew that defeat was inevitable, Reuben reluctantly ordered his men to burn down all the military supplies at the Redwood garrison that they had gathered over many years. There were many sophisticated weapons such as flaming catapults and also a year's worth ration of food for 100,000 soldiers. All of it was completely burned. The burning continued for three days and three nights. In the end, Reuenthal had to order his soldiers to help put out the fire. That cost him the lives of a few hundred soldiers and in return he only managed to salvage a little bit of food.

It was fortunate that Reuben made the decision. Otherwise, the Great Moon Kingdom would have laid siege to the rest of the Empire with their catapults.

“Your Excellency, they have arrived!” One of the commanders cried out.

Reuben raised his sword in high spirits and shouted, “Raise the flags!”

Below the walls of the city, the Great Moon Kingdom had assembled. The cavalries were on both sides with the infantries neatly lined up in the middle.

“Damn them!” Reuben cursed. “Infantries! Reuenthal’s men only know how to ride horses and cannot fight on foot! Hmph, do you think being able to use the phalanx formation means you are already an infantry army? Let me see how strong your infantries are!”

The sun started to shine from the east. It shone on the wilderness as rows of scimitars reflected the dazzling and murderous sunlight!

Chapter 71: Fierce Battle at Watt

The sun had completely risen and it gave the people a sense of warmth. Nevertheless, the soldiers of the Northwest Legion felt cold as they watched the Great Moon Kingdom launch their first attack of the day.

An ox horn sounded from below the walls and immediately, the Great Moon Kingdom infantry regrouped to reveal a few openings in its formation. The openings gave passage to a dozen simple wooden shield-vehicles as they were being slowly pushed out. Each vehicle had a large wooden plank wrapped in thick yak skin that was soaked in water. It was thick and slippery enough to defend against arrows. It was not damaged even when the magicians of the Empire cast Wind Blade and Fire Ball on it.

A few thousand soldiers formed the phalanx formation and moved slowly towards the fortress walls under the cover of the shield-vehicles. Following right behind, were groups of infantrymen carrying the scaling ladder.

They waited until the shield-vehicles came closer and within the range of fire. After that, General Reuben gave the order to shoot and thousands of archers immediately started to shoot their arrows. Thousands of sharp arrows immediately rained down from the walls. Most of the arrows were blocked by the shield-vehicles but a few managed to pass through and hit their targets who were not properly protected. Countless soldiers screamed and fell to the ground. Some of those shot by the arrows died immediately. Others were shot in less vital spots and they rolled on the ground in pain.

The foreigners did not break their formation. They did not move slower nor did they run back because of fear. Instead, they valiantly continued to push the shield-vehicles towards the walls. When a companion beside them was shot down by arrows, they would at the most turn and look at their companion in grief for a

moment. After that, they turned back, looked furiously at the archers of the Empire and made great efforts to move forward.

At the same time, the Great Moon Kingdom's archers started to take action. They started to blindly shoot back at the walls using their long bows. Fortunately, on the walls were also hundreds of the Empire's magicians who immediately took to the skies. The magicians were wearing white robes. They formed a circular light that shrouded the walls. Thousands of arrows hit the 'light-curtain', vibrated and then dropped to the ground.

After the first volley of arrows, Reuben told his army to wait for a moment. Wasting arrows on the shield-vehicles was not worth it. He planned to save the arrows right then and use them only after the enemy had prepared the scaling ladder. Reuben sighed. If only they had taken at least a third of the arrows left behind at the Redwood garrison, it would have been great.

The heavy shield-vehicles were finally pushed to the side of the walls. However, the shields were useless at this point. Even though the soldiers of the Great Moon Kingdom had shields, the archers on the walls could clearly see them.

Once again, Reuben gave the order for the archers to start shooting their arrows again. The sound of numerous arrows flying could be heard as they started to rain down. The white-robed magicians then stopped forming the shroud of light in front of the walls as well. Suddenly, the walls emitted a red light as though each magician was surrounded by a layer of fire. After a while, hundreds of fireballs fell from the sky and ruthlessly smashed into the Great Moon Kingdom's formation. The sound of explosions could be heard and a few soldiers hid behind the shield-vehicles. Some of them immediately raised their thick leather shields to block the fireballs. The small fireballs would hit the shields and turn into sparks while the larger fireballs would crush the shields and explode.

After they received an order, the soldiers of the Great Moon

Kingdom threw away their useless shields. From behind, a group of soldiers carried the scaling ladder towards the walls. The defenders of the Empire noticed the threat and almost all of their bows and arrows were redirected to aim at the group carrying the scaling ladder. Under the intensive firing of arrows, a lot of soldiers miserably bled and fell to the ground. Countless corpses of the Great Moon Kingdom's soldiers were on the ground. Those who were injured but not dead desperately tried to crawl away.

The group of soldiers who carried the scaling ladder received the most casualties. Many of them died and there were also a considerable amount of them injured. However, whenever one of the soldiers carrying the scaling ladder died, he would immediately be replaced by another soldier from the Great Moon Kingdom. There were also some who would rush in front to take the hit for their companions who were carrying the ladder. When one fell, immediately two more soldiers rushed in front to do the same. When Reuben saw this, he gritted his teeth. He could not understand why the foreign grassland barbarians had such fearlessness.

About a dozen huge scaling ladders were finally placed against the walls. The soldiers of the Empire started to try all kinds of methods to push down the ladder. Meanwhile, the Great Moon Kingdom's soldiers held their blades in their mouths as they climbed the ladder. Often, when they were about halfway up, however, the scaling ladders were pushed down. The soldiers screamed as they fell to the ground. Stones were also being thrown from the walls. Many of the soldiers who had climbed up halfway were hit in the face by falling stones and cried out in distress as they fell down.

After that, dozens of soldiers from the Great Moon Kingdom held the ladders in place to prevent them from being pushed by their enemies. After a huge sacrifice, the first team of soldiers finally reached the top of the walls. When they got to the top, they were

greeted by the Empire army's swords from all directions. The foreign warriors fought bravely using their scimitars, fists and some of them even used their teeth. Some who were seriously injured grabbed the nearest Imperial soldier and jumped down from the walls. They made sure that when they died, the enemy soldiers also died with them. There were also soldiers from the Great Moon Kingdom who would crash their bodies hard against their enemies before dying. This was to keep them away from the scaling ladders and to win time for their companions who were climbing up the ladder.

Reuben saw their red eyes and was surprised because the Great Moon Kingdom's soldiers were brave and fierce beyond expectations. At the same time, he gritted his teeth and ordered to send the reserved soldiers to the weaker corners of the fortress.

When the first team of soldiers who climbed up the walls was desperately fighting, a continuous flow of soldiers followed from behind. When Reuben found out what was happening, he immediately gave an order. The command flag was waved and a group of soldiers was mobilized to surround and drive down the enemies who had managed to climb up the walls.

The top of the walls was filled with the sounds of screaming and roaring. Broken limbs were occasionally flung around. Armed with swords, the soldiers of the Empire and the soldiers of the Great Moon Kingdom clashed. There were many foreign soldiers who killed ferociously. It was to the extent that they even removed their leather armors and helmets. While roaring, they charged forward and engaged in combat with the Empire soldiers. With every swing of the sword, there would be blood and a mournful cry!

At a distance below the walls, there was a group with sturdy stature among the troops of the Great Moon Kingdom. They wore black leather armors and sat on black horses. Among them was a man clothed in a white leather robe. He had long brown hair that

was tied into numerous short ponytails at the back of his head. With one hand, he lightly played with his thick brown beard. He grinned as he watched the fight on the walls with eyes that were as sharp as an eagle. A strange looking sword hung at his waist. Its hilt was made of pure gold.

“Tell the others to get ready!” His voice was icy cold. He then turned to look at the men beside him and smiled. “It seems like the Radiant Empire's army is still quite competent! That Reuben is not an oaf either. It is unfortunate that I do not have any magician with me. Otherwise, this would be much easier. Fortunately, they do not have that many magicians... Look... their magicians are already worn out and need to rest...”

Behind him, a slender figure on a red horse appeared. He wore a black leather robe, which wrapped around his body tightly. He also wore a pair of leather gloves, a hooded cloak and a mask leaving only his eyes exposed.

“Reuenthal, you really are a cold-blooded man!” The person sneered. With a resounding voice, he continued to speak, “You are wasting your soldiers' lives. Even if you manage to defeat Reuben and occupy the fortress, your newly trained third-rate soldiers are just not good enough!”

“Hmph!” Reuenthal smiled coldly and gazed at the man. “Do you think my warriors are not brave enough?”

“Bravery is important but they do not know how to use their brains. Infantrymen cannot only be brave. Look at how Reuben's soldiers are fighting! I admit that your cavalry is powerful but their infantrymen are not as simple as you think. Take a good look! In a one-on-one situation, Reuben's soldiers cannot defeat your soldiers. However, when they fight in groups of 3, they can defend at least 5 of your third-rate infantrymen. On top of that...” The person paused and revealed a trace of disapproval. “Their magicians only need to rest for an hour. After that, they will be able to fight again.”

Reuenthal raised his eyebrow and gave him a tyrannical gaze. After a while, his gaze disappeared and he laughed. "You shall see! Before the sun sets today, I will be able to capture Watt Fortress! My infantrymen are not as good as Reuben's but he will not be able to hold out much longer! After so many defeats, the morale of the soldiers is low. They will not be able to hold out long enough and will soon slack. As long as I cruelly continue the attack, they will soon be defeated!"

"Hmph..." The black masked man gave an indifferent smile and spoke calmly, "I believe you can capture them. Reuben right now is already out of energy. However, as I have said, you are wasting the lives of your soldiers. Obviously, you can accomplish this by sacrificing 10,000 lives but you insist on sacrificing 30,000 lives to accomplish this. What is the meaning of such victories?" After ridiculing him, the black masked man no longer looked at Reuenthal. He slowly turned around and rode off, ignoring the tragic battle at the distant walls behind him.

After the black masked man left, Reuenthal showed his anger and ruthlessly spoke, "I certainly know that the losses from this siege are great but what else can I do? That Reuben burned everything and I do not have any food! Should I just wait here and waste our time? Hmph! The foreigners from the Roland Continent and the people from the Radiant Empire are the same. There is nothing good about them!"

Chapter 72: Bloodstained Tulip

The siege warfare became more intense at midday. After the fierce battle in the morning, several thousand corpses from both sides were strewn all over and in the vicinity of the fortress walls. The walls of Watt Fortress were dyed red with blood and gave off a pungent smell.

Reuenthal did not order a retreat even after the fierce battle in the morning. Instead, he kept ordering his soldiers to charge into Watt Fortress in batches. Even though a lot of his men had perished atop the walls, he did not feel a tinge of regret. It was because he knew that he had to capture Watt Fortress to fortify his position in the Northwest. He had to capture Watt Fortress before he could consider the possibility of having complete control of the Northwest.

As long as he could occupy the Northwest for a long period of time, he would be able to make use of the mines and harvests from the fertile soil to steadily advance the Great Moon Kingdom! His cavalries would be able to wear armor. He would also be able to provide his infantrymen with the best equipment and his soldiers with sufficient supply of food.

These were all things that the Great Moon Kingdom were very short of.

With these materials, they would be able to build a foundation to crush the Empire. As long as they had 2 or 3 years for cultivation, the Great Moon Kingdom would gain enough military strength to fight a full-scale war with the Radiant Empire and compete for supremacy of the continent!

That was why Reuenthal made up his mind to capture Watt Fortress even if he had to sacrifice half of his soldiers.

So what if we lose half of our soldiers?

The grasslands were full of valiant warriors. Reuenthal only needed to give the order and all the young men would immediately get on their horses and form a brave cavalry.

Due to this, Reuenthal decided that he had to obtain Watt Fortress no matter how large his sacrifice. He needed the Watt Fortress and the other military positions to establish a strong defense system in the Northwest. He had to do so to make sure that the Northwest would remain in the hands of the Great Moon Kingdom!

The Empire's soldiers on the walls were already exhausted. They were injured and all of them had blood on their faces. Reuben also no longer had any more reserves. He had already on two occasions, mobilized soldiers from the other three gates up to the walls. He did not dare to do so again because Reuenthal's military strength was too strong. It would be very dire if any one of those gates left empty, was attacked by the cunning Reuenthal.

In one morning, the archers had exhausted all of their arrows. As more and more enemies successfully climbed up the scaling ladders and clambered atop the walls, the archers no longer have space to shoot their arrows, so they pulled out their swords for close combat with their enemies. That morning, up on those narrow walls Reuben had already lost more than 20,000 of his soldiers!

Many of the Empire garrison soldiers had fully utilized their swords. It was not known if the blood that coated the swords belonged to their enemies or themselves. The foreign barbarians did not seem to be afraid of death and continued to charge forward. Their swords were like tools used for harvesting human lives. Every time they swung their swords, they would collect a slice of bloody flesh. Above the walls, the people were tightly squeezed together like ants. Their screams and roars filled the whole earth.

Reuben also personally participated in the battle. He did not remember the number of soldiers he had killed. He met an

exceptionally sturdy foreign warrior and managed to pierce the warrior's chest. However, before the warrior died, he slashed at Reuben and almost severed his arm. The wound on Reuben's right arm was so deep that even his bone was visible. However, he kept fighting and did not have time to dress his wound.

Reuben started to feel afraid. He did not fear death but he was afraid that they would finally be unable to defend Watt Fortress. The sound of killing could still be heard above the walls. The morale of the Imperial Army had dropped. They looked at the group of fierce and fearless enemies who continued to rush up the walls. They all looked like savages and seemed to be endless.

Are they really not afraid to die?

An extreme sense of grief and heroism entered his heart and made him feel restless. He felt a sharp pain in his shoulder as a sword cut through his broken armor. Reuben subconsciously swung his sword with his left hand and cut the enemy into two. Suddenly, he felt weak and he almost fell to the floor.

A few loyal bodyguards rushed forward and engaged the enemy while two more soldiers desperately held Reuben's body and pulled him out.

"It's the end. We cannot defend the walls any longer!" Reuben was about to give an order for his soldiers to retreat from the walls and to fight on the streets. Suddenly, one of his soldiers trembled in excitement and shouted, "Your Excellency, Your Excellency! Listen... that... that is...!"

The loud and clear sound of a horn could be heard from a distance. The sound of the horn was long and sounded different from the sound that Reuben was used to hearing.

A few cavalrymen then came into view on the slopes behind the Great Moon Kingdom's battle formation. Although they were too far away and their attire as well as equipment were hardly discernible, the cavalryman leading them held a huge flame-like

banner.

Behind the man with the banner were rows of cavalrymen. They were like a black mass which seemed to grow bigger and bigger.

The military horn sounded once again but this time the sound was short and sharp. It sounded six times in succession.

Although they were far away, Reuben could still hear the neighing of their horses.

It was the Central Cavalry's peculiar 'order to charge' signal. When the horn sounded six times, everyone in the cavalry had to fall into attack formation. Those who delayed would be summarily executed.

Reuben's eyes immediately gleamed.

"Your Excellency, it is the 'Lightning God's Whip'! It is the 'Lightning God's Whip'!" The two soldiers with him were veteran soldiers. They could identify the sound and knew who they were as soon as they heard the horn.

"Reinforcements are here! The Empire's reinforcements are here!"

Although nobody on the walls spoke, tens of thousands of the Imperial soldiers all had the same thought.

Suddenly, a loud and clear voice resounded through the area.

"Wolves Fang!"

"Kill!" Tens of thousands of voices cried out at the same time.

At the same time, a storm started to gather in the sky.

A huge black mass of cavalrymen thronged down the slopes like a dark cloud being blown by the gathering storm. The thunderous but dull sound of hooves trampling the ground had a suffocating effect like a huge pressure bearing on one's heart.

Led by the cavalryman holding the banner, more and more

cavalrymen appeared, like a big swarm of ants on the slope.

The midday sun shone on the flame-like banner and revealed a brilliant tulip in flames.

“That... that’s the Tulip Family’s war banner!” Reuben was stunned and muttered as he could not believe his eyes. The muscles around his eyes also trembled for a moment. He then had a peculiar expression.

“It’s the Tulip Family’s war banner! The Tulip Family's war banner!” The soldiers of the Empire cried out in surprise. Their cry of surprise spread throughout the army.

Chapter 73: Mighty Army

Wherever there is the Tulip Family war banner, there is only victory! There will be no defeat!

All of the exhausted soldiers of the Northwest Legion who had been suppressed by the foreign warriors cheered loudly when they saw the huge banner in the distance. Their voices reverberated in the sky. They suddenly became extremely spirited and charged at their enemies beside them with renewed vigor!

Even the soldiers who were terrified of their fierce enemies at first, also went into a frenzy when they heard the horn and saw the banner. All of them seemed crazy and were no longer afraid of dying. At that moment, the injured soldiers were not afraid of pain and were able to fight back. Some of the soldiers even had their arms cut off but they did not stop fighting or roll on the ground in pain. Instead, the soldiers roared and cut off their opponent's necks while they were still a state of shock. They would then pick up their severed arm and find another enemy. Some of the soldiers threw themselves onto the enemy and bit them with their teeth.

One of the foreign warriors had just slashed an Imperial soldier and wanted to move on to the next person when he suddenly felt pain in his leg. He looked down to see that the soldier he just slashed was ferociously biting his leg. He screamed and was about to raise his sword when he was knocked down by another soldier who had a missing arm. He then fell off the wall screaming in pain.

Lunatics, they are all lunatics! Demons! They are not humans!

The foreign soldiers on the walls finally started to crumble. They might have been brave and valiant but their opponents were turning into lunatics who were not afraid of bleeding, pain, and death. Even before dying, their opponents would still sacrifice themselves just to kill one more of them. Moreover, there were innumerable lunatics. After some intense fighting, the foreign

soldiers started to feel terrified!

Below the city walls, Reuenthal who was in the middle of the Great Moon Kingdom's battle formation turned pale. He furiously looked at the approaching cavalry behind him!

Damn it! Where did these guys come from?

This was Reuenthal's first thought.

I have already routed all the forces of the Empire within a few hundred miles and also those reinforcements for the Northwest Legion before attempting the siege. Could it be that these guys came out from underground?

"Rear army, get ready! Rear army, get ready!" Reuenthal ordered loudly. The rear had no archers as all of them had been assembled at the front. So, he could only rely on the infantries stationed at the rear to defend themselves from the enemy. They had to obstruct their enemy. Otherwise, his battle formation would be destroyed.

Both flanks of the Great Moon Kingdom's cavalry also started to move. Following Reuenthal's orders, they turned around and rushed towards their enemy who had just launched a surprise attack.

Although Reuenthal had reacted quickly to the situation, Rody's speed was too fast for him.!

The layer of dark cloud gathered quickly and suddenly turned into a huge flood. The charging horde kicked up a huge cloud of dust as they arrived in front of Reuenthal's rear soldiers.

The Great Moon Kingdom's rear soldiers had just turned around. However, before they were able to prepare a good defensive formation, the charging enemy had already reached them. They despaired when they saw the 10,000 troops right in front of them!

Without stopping for even a moment, the 'Lightning God's Whip' cruelly ripped apart the enemy's formation. They also swung their

swords in an arc-like fashion. Immediately, blood started to spray as countless heads fell to the ground!

Some of the Great Moon Kingdom's soldiers were stunned. They were still panicking when they saw the sword coming towards them. At that moment, they realized that they were finished!

The Central Cavalry immediately tore through the fragile line of defense of the Great Moon Kingdom. As they rushed through the enemy lines, they used their specially made scimitars to inflict mortal wounds on their enemies. Quite often, the soldiers of the Great Moon Kingdom did not have any time to react. The Central Cavalry would rush up to them with their swords and as soon as their swords were raised, it would then be accompanied almost immediately by a miserable scream.

At long last, the whole formation started to crumble. The soldiers of the Great Moon Kingdom threw away their shields and started to scatter and run. However, they could not escape. They only had two legs and could not outrun the horses which had four legs. Soon, most of them ended up being trampled to death by the horses.

On the battlefield, the Central Cavalry broke through the infantry formations of the Great Moon Kingdom.

Reuenthal had slain more than 10 retreating officers but it was of no use. His soldiers had already broken up and dispersed like a defeated army. His personal soldiers were crowded together and were in a state of confusion!

Reuenthal's eyes turned red and he gritted his teeth. With his bodyguards protecting him, he retreated to the right. Although he was savage, he understood that he could not stop the assault of the enemy cavalry and could only give up his rear army.

Rody's mind was blank. His eyes were already red with all the killing. He had just slashed an enemy soldier on the shoulder but the sword was stuck in the shoulder bone. In a hurry, Rody picked

up an iron spear that was left behind by somebody on the ground.

He used the spear in his hands to cut a path forward. His horse neighed as its hooves flew in the charge. His horse continued to rush forward as the cavalry followed from behind.

When the enemy soldiers started to scream and scatter, Rody realized that the infantry's line of defense had been broken through.

At that moment, the Great Moon Kingdom's horn sounded from both sides. Immediately, Reuenthal's two flanks of cavalry appeared from both sides. Reuenthal was a great general. With one look, he could tell that the enemy cavalry had less than 10,000 soldiers. Although he was not prepared and the enemy had managed to destroy the formation of his infantry, he was still able to quickly assemble the cavalry on both sides. The two cavalries of the Great Moon Kingdom were like two sharp daggers. The cavalry from the left flank went to the front and blocked the way while the cavalry from the right flank headed directly to the middle of Rody's formation, hoping to destroy it!

Although Rody was young, he knew that he could not fight his enemy directly. His army did not have a lot of military strength and if he were to clash with the enemy head on, Reuenthal would have gradually defeated him with superior military strength.

The spear in his hands suddenly moved in a circular arc and cut down an approaching enemy cavalryman. Rody then roared, "Break through them! Enter the city!"

"Kill!" The Central Cavalry shouted bravely. Without a care, they ferociously charged at the enemy in front of them!

In the wilderness below the walls, the two cavalries clashed. The vanguard of a cavalry was knocked and fell off his horse. The moment he hit the ground, he was trampled on by numerous hooves.

Reuenthal's cavalymen were not cowards. However, they had to build up their momentum in a hurry. They did not have ample distance to enable their horses to pick up speed. The impact of their sprint was not as strong as the Central Cavalry's which had come from the top of a slope.

In addition, one cavalry attacked like a thunder while the other had hurriedly turned around to respond.

The formation of 20,000 from Reuenthal's cavalry was immediately destroyed. The soldiers of Wolves Fang whom Sieg had personally trained from the 'Lightning God's Whip' were beyond the expectations of the foreigners. They also felt that the scimitars in the hands of the enemy were powerful. Everyone was exceptionally brave. While charging, they were still able to maintain a tight formation. In contrast, the formations of the cavalymen in the Great Moon Kingdom were looser. As a result, Rody could immediately break up the formation with a slash of his dagger.

The 'Lightning God's Whip' was extremely swift. They already rushed out of the pincer trap before the enemy could attempt to cut them off. The commander of the Great Moon Kingdom's cavalry could only try to quicken his pace and chase from the back.

Suddenly, the dull sound of drums could be heard and the city gates opened. The Imperial Army's cavalry in full armor rushed out from the city gates.

Reuben was not a fool. He saw that the battle formation of Reuenthal's army had already been destroyed by the reinforcements. After that, Reuben had immediately assembled the remaining of the cavalry which numbered less than 10,000 soldiers and rushed out of the gate. This was Reuben's last card. He had initially intended to use them to break free if they were defeated and encircled.

Smoke billowed and dust flew everywhere. Reuben's 10,000

strong armored cavalry rushed out to block the Great Moon Kingdom's cavalry from intercepting Rody from the back. The enemy cavalry soon collapsed after being assaulted by this counter-pincer attack. The enemy cavalry scattered in all directions and Reuben decided not to pursue them. He galloped towards Rody and gave the compulsory order of getting the rescue warriors into the city

Reuenthal observed everything from a distance. He understood that the situation was already hopeless and any further efforts would only cause the casualties to increase. He furiously threw his scimitar to the ground before he gave the order to retreat.

Countless corpses of humans and horses could be found in the wilderness. The blood of humans and horses were mixed together giving off a bloody stench. The proud banner was also dyed in red and looked miserable under the sunlight. The screams of the wounded could be heard along with the sound of swords and spears piercing into the bodies.

Thus, Rody and the 10,000 strong Central Cavalry had raced a thousand li to the rescue of the Watt Fortress and defeated Reuenthal's army in a surprise attack. The banner of the Tulip Family once again fluttered proudly in the continent.

Chapter 74: The Scary Truth

At a distance, Reuenthal's defeated army scattered like ants. Reuenthal deserved to be called the cunning wolf of the grasslands as he was extremely fast in seizing an opportunity. The moment his cavalry was defeated, he immediately ordered a retreat and did not give Rody or Reuben any chance to pursue. The truth was, Rody and Reuben had no intention of pursuing. Reuben had less than 40,000 soldiers left while the 10,000 Wolves Fang under Rody had been marching for three days and had just fought a battle. They were all exhausted and did not have the ability to pursue.

Reuben quickly went down the fortress walls while being supported by his bodyguards and saw Rody leading the Wolves Fang through the gates.

When he saw the flame-like Tulip Family's banner, Reuben felt his body sway and his eyes turn blurry.

Reuben was unable to remember when was the last time he saw the banner. He watched the soldiers from the Central Cavalry walk through the city gate. Although fatigue could be seen, the excitement and determination on the faces of those soldiers could not be concealed.

The commanding general who was leading them was wearing an old-fashioned leather armor which was stained red with blood. His golden hair was flying in the air. His eyebrows were raised and the murderous glint in his dark blue eyes had yet to disappear. He looked like the duke from several decades ago! On top of that, Sieg who was holding his sword like an old companion was behind the duke. Reuben's heart shivered. He felt as if he had gone back in time.

After a few more steps forward, Reuben shook off the support of his bodyguards and rushed down from the flight of steps. He knelt in front of Rody's horse and burst into tears.

Rody was shocked when he saw a middle-aged high ranking general kneeling in front of him. He immediately dismounted from his horse.

“Reuben greets Your Excellency!” Reuben’s voice trembled. How many years had it been since he last said this sentence?

Rody panicked and quickly helped Reuben to stand. He hurriedly said, “Aren’t you the Regiment Commander Reuben? Your rank is higher than mine. Why are you kneeling?”

Reuben’s eyes were full of tears. He carefully looked at Rody and felt nostalgic. After all, the late duke had been dead for many years!

Sieg realized that Reuben had lost his self-control. He moved forward and gently helped him up. After that, Reuben shook his head and ordered his soldiers to lead the Central Cavalry into the barracks. Reuben then brought Rody to the official residence used by the garrison.

At that moment, the whole city felt extremely happy regardless of whether they were civilians or soldiers. They felt excited when they found out that they had won the battle. Both the army and civilians rushed to the streets to watch the reinforcement army enter the city. From time to time, there were a few enthusiastic civilians who would approach them and give them fruits and vegetables. There were also some children who happily ran alongside the cavalry.

Reuenthal’s homicidal reputation had already spread throughout the Northwest. It was known that the Great Moon Kingdom would burn, kill and plunder the places they captured. A few days ago, the civilians in the city were all frightened. They feared that if their city was captured, they would all meet a tragic end. Naturally, they were all relieved and happy when they heard that the enemy had been chased away by the reinforcement soldiers.

Along the way, Rody saw the happy civilians cheering and was

reminded of his encounter in the village. He sighed emotionally. At that time, Andy mocked him in his mind, "There is nothing strange about this. Between the Empire and Reuenthal, one of them is a creditor whereas the other is a robber. While the creditor comes every month to take away half of your belongings, the robber when encountered will indiscriminately take away everything. If they had to be compared, the creditor will naturally be more lovable."

However, Rody was still young at heart and was immersed in the joy of his victory. As a result, he did not pay too much attention to Andy's words.

The commander of the Northwest Legion established their commanding base at the original garrison building at the Watt Fortress. The minute they entered the base, two people in military uniforms walked out. They had flattering smiles and the person leading the way was fat. He looked less like a soldier and more like a wealthy landlord. The person beside him was considerably thinner and taller. The smile he had on was more like that of a crafty merchant. The two men had chosen to wear the commander's uniform and when they were seen by others, they looked out of place.

The guy who looked like a landlord saluted. "Subordinate Fedol, garrison soldier at the Watt Fortress greets Your Excellency." The man who looked like a merchant also introduced himself. "Subordinate Ferara, commander of the soldiers garrisoned at Trier Fortress greets Your Excellency."

Reuben who was originally happy suddenly had his mood dampened. The two men who had been hiding in the base seemed well informed. Even though the duke had just arrived, they already knew about it.

Rody frowned as he looked at the two men and nodded his head. He may have been a duke but his rank was just a commander. It was not higher than the ranks of those two men. He was used to

such mannerism since Sieg gave him similar treatment throughout the journey. So, he did not think that it was inappropriate when they were so polite. When Rody heard their names, he was surprised because their names reminded him of something but he could not quite figure out what.

Reuben was already very impatient. He immediately took Rody into the hall and forcefully pushed Rody to sit on the general's chair. Rody was alarmed and immediately jumped out of the chair. "General Reuben, this is not right! I am just a commander! How can I sit here?"

Reuben replied sternly, "Your Excellency, you are the Duke of the Tulip Family! Wherever the Tulip Family banner goes, the commanding generals can only hand over their authority! On top of that..." Reuben gave a bleak smile and continued, "My career as a regimental commander is already at an end. For my failures in the Northwest, His Majesty will probably..." Reuben laughed gloomily as he spoke.

Rody wanted to say something when Sieg gave him a meaningful glance. After that, Rody nodded his head and spoke loudly, "General Reuben, let us put off this matter till later! Firstly, His Majesty ordered me to come here and bring reinforcements. The second was to appoint me as a special envoy for the Northwest Legion. Now that the problems at the city walls have been solved, I would like Your Excellency to explain to me the current situation of the Northwest Legion."

Reuben nodded. Rody had already mentioned His Majesty, so he could no longer insist on anything. Also, since the duke had been appointed as a special envoy, it was his right to control the Northwest Legion.

Reuben immediately summoned all of the officers and commanders.

First, there was a brief introduction of the officers and generals.

The original Northwest Legion had five commanders. Two of them had been killed and their deputy commanders took over. The local defenders, who were the soldiers from Blackstone Fortress had already been intercepted by Reuenthal on the way here. They were defeated. They had already been routed and they could only wait to be reorganized after the war. At that moment, Reuben was introducing the remaining commanders to Rody. Rody glanced at them from a distance and did not find anyone who attracted his attention.

Suddenly, he spotted an officer among the crowd who was slightly younger than 30 years old. He had a thin and resolute face along with sharp eyes. Rody then looked at Reuben.

Reuben laughed and said, “This is the Northwest Legion's Right Cavalry Commander, Giesslunt. Originally, he was just a captain but two of the commanders were killed in action. He was promoted to replace the commanders. Just now...Just now, the one who led the soldiers out of the city to join Your Excellency in battle was him. However, both of the cavalries in the Northwest Legion had suffered heavy casualties. The original total was 30,000 cavaliers but now only 10,000 cavaliers remained. His post was just commander of the Right Cavalry Regiment but currently, he is also the commander of the entire Northwest Legion's cavalry.

Rody nodded and looked back at the man.

Giesslunt saw the duke look towards him. Although he did not change his expression, his eyes showed excitement. He also stood straight and looked at the Tulip Family insignia on Rody's chest. He was so excited that he trembled.

Reuben smiled wryly. “Giesslunt has been with me for many years. He is one of the most loyal soldiers under the Tulip Family's banner!”

Rody nodded his head and gave a wry smile. He used to be a youngster who blindly worshipped the Tulip Family himself.

The introductions continued and finally reached the fat man and the businessman. Reuben did not sound happy when he introduced them. He simply told Rody their ranks. The only thing that surprised Rody was the commander of Trier Fortress, Ferrara. He was actually a viscount!

Rody slowly nodded. When he asked about the condition of the Northwest Legion, Reuben gave him an awkward expression. He looked at everybody, gritted his teeth and slowly said, "Your Excellency, when the Northwest Legion retreated to this city, we had 91,000 soldiers. The past few days, we suffered heavy casualties and have about 70,000 soldiers remaining. Among them, there are 4,000 injured. Our remaining military strength is now, however, less than 50,000 soldiers."

"What?" Rody frowned. "You just said that there are 70,000 soldiers and 4,000 of them are wounded. How come we only have 50,000 soldiers? What happened to the remaining 10,000 or more soldiers?"

Reuben was embarrassed. He glanced at a few of the commanders present and sighed. Before he had the chance to speak, Ferrara said, "Your Excellency, that should be enough about the number of soldiers. The military secretary of register can report to you the actual number after calculation later. Your Excellency should look at the current plans. Now that Reuenthal's army has just retreated, there are a lot of decisions that need to be made."

Rody was no longer a child who did not know anything. Although he did not understand the entire problem, he faintly understood that there must have been a specific reason. He nodded his head, glanced at Reuben and stopped pursuing the matter.

After that, he and the other subordinates at all levels discussed the extent of damage to the city. They also ascertained the loss of equipment, weapons, horses as well as the damaged fortress wall and many others. They also discussed the compensation of bereaved families among other matters.

Rody, who lacked experience was at a loss. He noticed Reuben's awkward expression and guessed that this kind of matters must also be a headache for him. For Reuben, he preferred fighting as a commander over handling military affairs.

Fortunately, Sieg had ample experience on such matters from his time in the Central Cavalry. He never made a mistake in his logistical management. He was the one who personally dealt with all the logistical problems in the Wolves Fang. In such matters, he was extremely experienced.

The messy data made Rody's head spin. With the assistance of Sieg and the other staff officers, it was made easier. They arranged all the jobs that needed to be organized. Ferara and Fedol both looked happy when they saw that Rody was not good with military finance.

After all of that was finished, Reuben brought Rody and Sieg to the residence of the garrison. The residence originally belonged to Fedol. However, when Reuben retreated here, Fedol gave it to Reuben.

After sending off the others, Rody asked Reuben to stay back. He then gave Sieg an eye signal. Sieg immediately turned around and went out to make sure a guard was standing outside the room. He then walked back into the room and closed the door.

Rody hesitated and did not know how to ask. On the other hand, Sieg was really angry and shouted, "Reuben, what have you done?! There are 10,000 ghost soldiers! You have tarnished the name of the Tulip Family's banner!"

Reuben who was already mentally stressed, turned red when he heard Sieg's statement. He shouted back, "Sieg, do not talk nonsense! I, Reuben in all my life have never tarnished the name of the Tulip Family's banner! Those things..."

Sieg looked gloomy and ruthlessly replied, "In that case, explain these 10,000 ghost soldiers! How are you going to explain this to

the late duke in the afterlife?”

Reuben's face was pale as ashes. He hesitated for a moment before he finally explained. His explanation not only shocked Rody but also the corrupted officers.

“The Northwest Legion claims to have 200,000 soldiers! The main army has 100,000 soldiers. There is another 100,000 performing garrison duty. The figures sound very impressive. But, do you know, the Northwest Legion does not have that many soldiers?! The Northwest Legion’s actual military strength including myself, the other officers and all the defenders, were never more than 130,000 soldiers!”

“My main army was still good but the conditions of the local garrisons were actually frightening! According to the report, there were 15,000 soldiers at Loulan Fortress. It was a lot of soldiers. However, when they retreated from Loulan Fortress, only then did I find out that the situation was not right.”

“The commander of the Loulan Fortress is dead and his family has escaped. Hmph, do you know, his family had 150 guards and servants at home? On top of that, their names were listed as the defenders of Loulan Fortress. In other words, the commander of Loulan Fortress used the Empire's money on his own servants and family. I tortured a few escaped officers and found out that the real army in Loulan Fortress had less than 8,000 soldiers. Hmph, they reported 15,000 soldiers which mean that the commander misappropriated the funds for 7,000 soldiers! The other places are likely to be the same!”

“Were you never aware of this?” Sieg asked gloomily.

Reuben was embarrassed. He was originally a general. He could lead tens of thousands of soldiers and train them until they were proficient to go to war. That was his strength. However, he could not be a commanding officer and manage the entire army. That was not something he was able to do. When the logistics report

arrived, Reuben would get a headache from going through the materials. Therefore, he would quickly approve them.

“What about your main army? Didn’t you say that you had 100,000 soldiers?” Sieg asked again.

“The main force is slightly better as they would not be so daring in front of me! However, not long ago, I also found out that my Third Infantry Regiment and my Right Flank Cavalry Regiment were also embezzling money. The combined total was only 10,000. It was not as bad as the local garrison. My main army of 100,000 was actually an army of just more than 80,000.”

Sieg sighed and sat down on the chair.

Rody looked gloomy and slowly said, “You mentioned that the 200,000 Northwest Legion only had 130,000 soldiers. That means there are 70,000 ghost soldiers? How much is the salary of 70,000 people a year? Those officers dared to commit such a crime?”

Sieg gave Rody a glance and slowly said, “Your Excellency, you are still young and would not understand such things in the army. The numbers are not counted like that.” Sieg thought for a moment before explaining it to Rody.

“A year’s salary for a soldier is 3 gold coins. After multiplying, the salaries of 70,000 soldiers will be 210,000 gold coins. However, the actual amount is much more.

“A sword for the infantry was about 5 silver coins. Equipping them with armor would cost another 3 gold coins each. For archers, the bows and arrows also required money. In addition, the horses for cavalries cost 5 gold coins each and that was not including the cost of food required to feed the horses. Cavalry armor and weapons were also more expensive compared to the ones for infantries.

“The money embezzled for the ghost soldiers would also have to include money for their maintenance. The Empire would need to

spend about 7 gold coins for each infantry and 15 gold coins for each cavalryman every year. On top of that, there were also costs for maintaining the equipment. When all the costs were added up, the total amount was huge.

“After calculation, the 70,000 ghost soldiers would cost the Empire almost 1,000,000 gold coins a year. This large amount of money was constantly flowing into the hands of corrupt officials!”

Rody turned pale the moment he heard that. He stood up and slammed the table. The wooden table broke instantly.

“Is this the Empire’s third largest army, the Northwest Legion? Is this the elite army that is guarding the borders?” Rody was furious. He loudly asked, “General Reuben, what about that commander of Trier Fortress?! What about Ferara?”

Reuben felt ashamed and said, “Him? His Trier Fortress was almost an empty city! The report said that there were 15,000 soldiers when in actual fact, there were less than 5,000 soldiers...”

“Bastard!” Rody shouted. “No wonder when I passed by the village near Trier Fortress, I heard that the Imperial Army forcefully conscripted soldiers! This must be the reason. Due to the war, Ferara knew he could no longer hide this issue and forcefully conscripted the farmers to cover it up!”

“Reuben, since you already knew about this, why have you not punished them?!” Sieg was holding the hilt of his sword and was extremely angry. “Are you involved as well?”

Reuben was agitated and shouted back, “Punish? How was I supposed to punish them? Reuenthal was right outside the city! How could I punish them at that time? There are 7 commanders here now, that is including Ferara and Fedol. Among these 7 commanders, 4 of them are involved in embezzling! What could I have done? Catch them and execute them? The morale of the military was unstable. If suddenly, half of the available commanders were executed, how was I supposed to defend the city

and fight the war after that?”

“Then... what about [Louch](#)?” Sieg suddenly whispered. “I heard that Louch was a commander at the Blackstone Fortress. They were on the way to support you when they were intercepted by Reuenthal.”

Reuben showed a solemn expression. “Louch was once His Excellency’s bodyguard. Naturally, he would not do this kind of things! I have already checked. All of the 15,000 soldiers from the Blackstone Fortress were genuine. When Louch was killed, his men who managed to escape reported to me. When Louch was in the Blackstone Fortress, his family did not have much wealth. They only had a small residence and two horses.”

Sieg sat back down on the chair. His face revealed both sadness and anger.

Rody also felt abnormally worried. He never expected the situation of the Northwest Legion to be that terrible. In fact, he never expected more than half of the Northwest Legion to be rotten.

What about the other armies of the Empire then? Northwest Legion was supposed to be one of the three largest armies in the Empire and yet they are like this...

Rody then suddenly remembered what he saw at the Empire's most famous Central Cavalry in the Imperial City that day. His heart turned cold.

He was no longer happy about the earlier victory.

After some time, Rody slowly said, “ General Reuben, the war has just ended. Go and attend to the army and military affairs... Let Commander Sieg accompany you... I... I want to be alone for a while.”

Sieg and Reuben looked at each other. After that, Sieg walked out of the room without sparing Reuben another glance. Reuben felt

ashamed and sighed as he quietly followed Sieg out.

Rody was sitting alone in the room and thought to himself. He felt like he wanted to run out and immediately slaughter Ferrara and Fedol.

At that moment, there was a knock on the door and the captain of the bodyguards walked in. After saluting, he whispered to Rody, “Your Excellency, the commander of the garrison at Watt Fortress, Fedol invites you for dinner.”

“What dinner?!” Rody suddenly shouted.

The captain was shocked. Ever since he followed the young duke, he noticed that the duke had never treated his subordinates in a haughty manner. He did not know why he was angry.

“The dinner is to celebrate today’s victory,” the captain whispered again.

Rody sneered and was about to say no when he suddenly had an idea. He then spoke in a cold voice, “Tell them that I will be there!”

At that moment, there was a peculiar and sharp flash in Rody’s eyes

Louch. The chinese characters, 老七 (Lǎo qī), actually mean 'seventh bro'. Such names, or nicknames, are usually reserved for close friends. I have decided to use Louch because it is more in keeping with the naming sense in this novel.

Chapter 75: Unfriendly Banquet

Everyone in the Watt Fortress was rejoicing. The only ones who were frowning were Ferara and Fedol. The war in the Northwest had exposed their crimes of embezzlement. A few days ago, Reuenthal's main army attempted to siege the Watt Fortress. In order to stabilize the morale of the army, Reuben did not treat them too harshly. However, the enemy had finally retreated and both Ferara and Fedol did not know whether they were supposed to be happy or unhappy.

Had Reuenthal broke into the city, all of them would be dead. They heard that the tyrant would not take prisoners. If that had happened, it would have been the end of their accumulated wealth. They would have also lost their wives and concubines to those grassland demons.

The problems in the city were solved and it would soon be time for accounts.

Fedol was an oaf while Ferara was the powerful one. Only when they received the reply that the duke would be joining them for dinner, did they start to feel a bit more at ease.

They were not worried about Reuben. Ever since the Northwest Legion had been defeated, they knew that Reuben's days as the Regimental commander were numbered. The accounting issues would no longer be his concern. However, the newly appointed young Duke of the Tulip Family, made both of them feel disturbed. Ferara was a viscount and came from a family with a slightly notable background. Naturally, he would know about the young duke. He heard that the duke was a playboy in the Imperial Capital. He was a person who enjoyed good wine and beautiful women. That made him his kindred spirit. As kindred spirits, he would probably not punish them, right?

Ferara believed that since Rody was appointed by His Majesty as

a special envoy, Rody would be the most influential person in the Northwest. If he could get Rody to be on his side, then he could accuse Reuben of the defeat in the Northwest. After that, when the people in the Empire pressed for answers, they would not be able to find any.

Besides, the emperor would not sit idly and ignore him. After all, he embezzled millions of gold coins every year, which was almost half of the Empire's money. The only problem left was the young duke. He never expected him to be able to defeat Reuenthal. Initially, Ferara was worried that he was one of those with powerful roles. However, when he heard about Rody's consent to join them for dinner, one of his worries disappeared. There was nothing strange about people from the Tulip Family winning battles. As long as Rody also liked the glamor, he would then be able to have a breakthrough.

The two of them discussed how to impress the duke. The duke would naturally have money and territory. From the rumors he had heard, the duke was a playboy. It looked like they would need to make use of women to win him over. Ferara told Fedol about his plans but Fedol looked reluctant. Ferara then looked at him angrily and Fedol immediately relented.

If they could not get out of the mess they were in, they would probably lose their lives. There would be no point in protecting this treasure. If the situation became irredeemable, the people in the Imperial Capital would definitely want a sacrifice. Ferara, who was a viscount with some connections would definitely not be sacrificed. So, if the time were to come, Fedol would likely be the one to be sacrificed.

At that moment, Fedol had to agree with the plan.

That night, the dinner celebration was held at a noble's manor in Watt Fortress. When the Northwest region was occupied by the enemy, most of the nobles fled with their family's wealth and belongings to Watt Fortress. Some of them managed to move on to

the Empire's hinterland while some who were slow, were besieged at the fortress. Now that the danger had passed, the dinner celebration would definitely include those with prestige.

Ferara had put a lot of thought into organizing the dinner. Although it was during the war when he fled, he did not care about the citizens in Trier Fortress. He only cared about his family's wealth which required 10 carriages to cart. Most of the nobles did something similar. There were even some who took their chefs and entertainers along with them.

In the garden of the manor where melodious music was played, there were some well-dressed very important persons and some beautiful women with makeup. They all heard that the young duke was attending the dinner celebration and he was not married. It was definitely good news for them. The rich and powerful nobles in the Northwest would dress up their daughters like princesses. Nobles who did not have daughters would adopt their nieces as daughters and bring them along. As for those who did not have any daughters or nieces, they could only sigh.

For a time, the garden looked extremely beautiful. However, the nobles who were there chasing after beautiful girls were in a bad mood. It was the first time they had such a gathering since the war in the Northwest. The playboys who had been oppressed were waiting for that night to enjoy themselves. When they saw the lawn full of beautiful girls, they went up and tried to strike up a conversation. However, none of the girls paid them any attention as they stretched their necks and continued to look at the doorway. Even those girls who used to be their secret lovers ignored them. The girls looked like they wanted to give those guys a tight slap to send them flying out of the city gates.

Ferara and Fedol also stood at the front gate feeling uneasy. They each held a glass of wine and smiled at each other. Their success or failure would determine the night. They then looked at the woods. That was where they kept their secret weapon.

Suddenly, a loud voice shouted from a distance, “His Excellency the Duke has arrived!”

Everyone in the garden immediately became alarmed. All of them hurriedly lined up near the entrance to greet the duke. The girls quarreled with one another to obtain a more favorable position.

They soon heard the sound of leather boots and then, a group of soldiers wearing the Central Cavalry’s uniform walked into the garden. The soldiers were led by an officer with murderous eyes. He leisurely glanced at the crowd and ignored their surprised look. After that, he spoke in a low voice, “Line up!”

The soldiers immediately stood on both sides. A few rude soldiers roughly pushed away the girls and ignored their subtle cursing. After that, the sound of leather boots was heard once again as the duke slowly walked in.

Everyone was stunned. The duke was in his military uniform and he also brought along his massive sword. They did not know whether it was on purpose or not but the leather armor that the duke was wearing still had bloodstains.

Everyone else was wearing noble robes. How could he wear such an attire to the dinner? Ferara and Fedol could only brace themselves as they greeted him.

Rody only said a few words to oblige and followed them in. Behind him, his bodyguard and four other Wolves Fang soldiers followed closely. The surrounding nobles who were watching the duke were treated like a nuisance. Before they could even say a few words of praise, they were already pushed away by the soldiers. The soldiers pushed them all away regardless of their wealth, position or gender.

Feeling helpless, everyone could only speak from a distance. For a long moment, words of flattery like ‘Your Excellency is wise and brilliant’, ‘Your Excellency is the pillar of the Empire!’ and ‘Your Excellency is the role model of the army!’ were spoken in

succession. They could finally utter those words of flattery they had practiced for half a day. However, their flattery was often mixed with a few cries of pain as they were driven away by the soldiers.

Everyone soon learned from experience and did not dare to approach Rody. For those who had wanted to put on a show to impress the duke, it seemed a little atrocious to shout from such a distance. It was also questionable if they should have shed any crocodile tears since they were so far away. Could the duke have seen their tears?

Ferara looked stiff as he guided Rody to a seat in the courtyard.

He had to admire the efforts put in for the artistry. Although materials were currently lacking in Watt Fortress, they were still able to set up an impressive banquet. They were unable to obtain good food but they had the ingenuity to set up a huge oven in the middle of the courtyard. On the oven, there was a skewer with an already roasted golden lamb.

Under the fire, the smell of the roasted mutton filled the air.

A few officers sliced some chunks of meat from the legs of the lamb and sent the meat over to them. Ferara immediately pushed it aside and said, "Your Excellency, this is the Great Moon Kingdom's famous roasted mutton. It was cooked by the chefs from the Northwest. I believe Your Excellency has never had this in the capital..."

Rody nodded and took the silver dining cutlery offered to him by the waiter. After cutting the mutton a little, he showed an impatient expression and deliberately shouted, "Damn, this knife is not fast enough!" After that, he took out his sword which was one meter in length and cut the mutton into small pieces. He then smiled and stuck his gleaming sword into the table which was worth 20 gold coins.

Everyone present did not know how to react and just stared at

the young duke. After a long time, a witty guy suddenly shouted, “Your Excellency’s behavior is refreshing! As expected of a general!” That sentence immediately reminded everyone that it was the time for flattery. Some of them regretted that they were too slow to act and allowed someone else to grab the opportunity.

Rody smiled and slowly lifted his glass of wine to propose a toast. After giving a meaningful wink, his bodyguards finally moved to the side.

The atmosphere finally became more harmonious as several nobles bravely walked up to him. Even the people from behind started to approach him when they realized that the soldiers were no longer blocking the way. After that, there was a short moment for greetings. Rody did not act too cold or too warm. However, he treated them politely. When someone proposed a toast with him, he did not refuse. He also did not speak about the war in the Northwest. Ferrara sighed. As he was of noble birth and had been to the Imperial Capital before, he chatted with Rody about the scenery in the Imperial capital and about other nobles. After that, the topic shifted to the savageness and arrogance of Reuenthal. That was something all the nobles agreed with. They loudly praised the duke for his miraculous skill and his ability to defeat the devil, Reuenthal the moment he was dispatched. After that, they talked about the losses and destruction caused by Reuenthal. The other nobles were agitated and their eyes brimmed with tears. They felt grateful to Rody for saving them and cursed Reuenthal for the loss of their properties.

Rody smiled and comforted everyone, “To all of you who defended the Northwest for the Empire, the bigger the losses you suffered, the more loyal you are to the Empire.” Immediately, all of them became anxious and started to exaggerate their losses to show their loyalty to the Empire.

One of the nobles told the tale of how his family’s servant had fought bravely after the army was defeated. The servant stood

steadfast against the strong enemy. At that time, Rody secretly scoffed and slowly said, "Very good! Very good!"

After Rody said those words, everyone was boiling in excitement. They all started telling their stories about their bloody fights with the enemy, their defeat and how they 'retreated' to risk their lives at Watt Fortress. They claimed they had requested to fight the enemy but were prevented by Reuben's orders. If they did not adhere to Reuben's orders, they would be rushed out of Watt Fortress. They claimed to have risked their lives fighting as a service to their country.

Rody listened to them one by one but from time to time he would comment, "Very good." He continued listening until all of them had finished telling him their stories. After that, his voice lowered as he said, "I understand that all of you are very loyal. I truly admire the fact that you all wholeheartedly served your country! Although the enemy has retreated, for now, you can still have your chance to express your loyalty! Today, I personally want to recruit an army to fight against Reuenthal! Since you all have the intention to fight, I will give all of you the opportunity. For the counterattack, why don't you join the vanguard? For those seeking to fight in the battles, go and register your name at the garrison tomorrow. I will definitely allow you to fight the enemy."

These words immediately made the audience silent. Rody looked at them coldly. "What's wrong? Could it be that the loyalty you speak of is merely words?"

Ferara was sweating. He gave Fedol a meaningful glance and then said, "Your Excellency, this is a dinner celebration. Let us talk about killing the enemy another day. I believe that everyone here is loyal to the Empire. As long as Your Excellency gives the order, we will all be willing to risk our lives."

Everyone agreed but their voices were less enthusiastic.

Rody did not say much more and changed the topic. He asked

about the common customs in the Northwest and the atmosphere slowly recovered.

At that moment, Fedol went in front of Rody with a bright smile and whispered to him, "Your Excellency, the woods behind this courtyard has quite a nice view. It has maple trees that are rare in the Northwest. Your Excellency may want to go and admire it."

"Oh?" Rody frowned. He then followed Fedol into the woods.

The moment he walked into the edge of the woods, a silhouette suddenly appeared and bumped into him. Rody smelled something fragrant. He spontaneously stretched out his hands and felt something soft. He then heard a gentle voice. "Oh."

From the voice, it was evident that the person felt a bit of pain from the collision. He looked again and saw a young woman in his arms. She looked at Rody and her slender arms were around Rody's neck. She was breathing faintly and looked both shy and scared.

"Your Excellency, it was an accident. Your Excellency... I..." After she spoke, she nibbled her lip and her expression showed that she was terrified. However, her eyes were a bit seductive.

"Who are you?" Rody immediately let her go.

"Your Excellency, I am... aya..." The woman was just about to stand up when her legs suddenly weakened and she fell down into Rody's arms. Rody's face turned red. "What happened?"

"My legs... I think I sprained my legs." The woman gently leaned against Rody's chest. She sounded sweet and charming.

Rody frowned. Then, he turned around and gave his bodyguard a meaningful glance. "This lady seems to have sprained her legs. Help her back."

As instructed, two of the sturdy bodyguards walked up and took her from Rody's arm without showing any tenderness. One held her by the left arm, while the other by the right and they took her

away despite her screaming.

“What else have you all prepared?” Rody coldly asked Ferrara and Fedol. At that moment, both of them were sweating profusely and their faces were pale.

Rody suddenly smiled and said, “I will have to politely refuse your kindness. Do you know why I am not happy?”

“Hmph!” Rody did not wait for them to answer before he continued, “Currently, there is a war going on. What kind of impression will this give? If I take the lead in having a life of pleasure, how am I supposed to lead the army? How am I supposed to fight? I understand your good intentions but you must remember to choose the right time and occasion. Do not make this so obvious and let so many people see. Understand?”

Ferrara immediately felt relief. Before that he was so frightened, it felt like his soul was leaving his body. He quickly wiped his sweat and said, “Yes, yes, yes! I was too hasty! Your Excellency, please pardon us!”

Rody smiled and said, “I came to you tonight for other matters!”

“Your Excellency, feel free to instruct us!” Seeing that things turned out for the better, Ferrara immediately nodded.

“Good.” Rody pretended to think to himself for a moment and then he continued, “Let us find a place to talk.”

While the whole city in Watt Fortress celebrated their victory, Reuenthal who had retreated back to Redwood Base, chopped up six of his scout captains into several pieces.

Reuenthal was feeling distressed. He had just lost 40,000 infantries in the attempted siege. To him, the infantry was more important than the cavalry. This was because the grasslands would never have a shortage of cavalries. He just needed to give the order and he would easily gather hundreds of thousands of strong cavalrymen. All of them grew up on horseback and used swords. As

a result, they had an innate talent to be good cavalymen. However, they had a fatal weakness. The warriors of the grasslands were unable to fight without their horses.

Reuenthal had spent a whole year with the aid of a secret envoy from the Roland mainlands to train tens of thousands of infantrymen. With that, he was almost certain of victory. Unfortunately, an enemy cavalry had appeared out of nowhere. Later, he was told that the cavalry was the Empire's most elite cavalry. What was even more shocking was the commander of the cavalry. It was the Tulip Family's duke.

There was nobody on the continent who did not know the Tulip Family. It was the Tulip Family, with the support of the 'Lightning God's Whip' who had conquered their nation many years ago. To the foreigners of the grasslands, the Tulip Family was their humiliation and their nightmare.

In the battle, Reuenthal lost 40,000 soldiers. Among them, he lost 20,000 soldiers to the siege. However, it was the Empire's Tulip Family who caused his defeat. When the enemy attacked from the rear and pushed all the way to the front, he had lost another 10,000 soldiers. The ones who got killed by the 'Lightning God's Whip' were only a few thousand. The remaining soldiers were trampled to death by the horses. How could Reuenthal not feel upset?

The more annoying thing was the special envoy from the Roland mainland. The moment the envoy saw the retreat, he left without a word. The 10,000 cavalymen he brought with him also quietly disappeared. They seemed unconcerned by the defeat.

However, Reuenthal did not dare to turn against them. He was aware of the secret envoy's real strength. If he were to suddenly attack this envoy, there was a high chance that he would die instead. Although the special envoy had never fought with anyone since he arrived, he often inadvertently gave Reuenthal a fearful feeling. It reminded him of his childhood encounter with the wolf

in the grassland.

Reuenthal had fought with the Empire for a very long time and seen a lot of warriors whom the Empire called high-ranking warriors. However, none of them were able to make Reuenthal that vigilant.

When they retreated back to Redwood Base, Reuenthal was feeling furious. The secret envoy from the Roland continent, who was once upon a time his comrade just gave him a cold and indifferent glance.

It was an expression of absolute contempt, full of ridicule and disdain. His eyes were like those of a lion baring its fangs at an ant.

In the middle of the night, a hand had just put down a pen in one of the barracks at Redwood Base. The owner of the hand rolled up a note and opened the window to grab an eagle. He then gently slipped the paper into a small metal ring which was already tied to the eagle's legs and gently released it. The eagle flapped its wings and flew away.

“The Tulip Family's banner has reappeared... Things are becoming complicated...” The person gently sighed. His face was covered by a veil but his eyes had a meaningful gaze.

Chapter 76: Long Distance Raid

“Your Excellency, do you mean...” Fedol’s eyes flashed. He exchanged glances with Ferara and they both saw that the other was also surprised.

Just then, the duke took them into the woods for a discussion. However, the duke was extremely direct and arrived at his main topic of ‘money’ quickly. Although money was indispensable in official businesses, the duke was too direct and ‘stretched out his hand’ without any warning. Both of them did not know that Rody was an impostor. Although Rody had lived the life of a noble for a few months, it was not enough to learn how to speak in a roundabout way especially when engaging in shady businesses.

Ferara was surprised but he also felt relieved. He was no longer afraid that Rody would not receive money. Rather, he was afraid that he had nowhere to disburse his money. Ferara immediately smiled and said, “I know that the war in the Northwest has caused many to feel nervous. My army is also lacking supplies. However, I am willing to sell off my property to raise military funds so, Your Excellency need not worry!”

Fedol also nodded immediately but his face showed a pained expression. He then said, “Although my family’s finances are currently not good, for the military I am willing to donate...” After that, Fedol stopped for a moment to count before continuing loudly, “10,000 gold coins.”

Hearing those words, Rody furrowed his eyebrows. Ferara was also feeling angry and mentally cursed Fedol.

Since the Duke is the one who started talking about money, he must have known about the embezzlement of the military fund. Yet, that idiot, Fedol, still values his money so much. That good-for-nothing!

Sure enough, the young duke was silent for a while before he

slowly said, “Very good, Your Excellency Fedol! You are very generous! 10,000 gold coins!” He paused for a moment before he coldly continued, “Before the siege, Watt Fortress was reported to have 15,000 soldiers. During the siege, the one who went up the walls to fight was Reuben and his main army. Your soldiers only helped with public security! Now that the battle is over, how many soldiers are there in Watt Fortress? Watt Fortress is a first-class fortress! By the Imperial order, there should have been 4,000 bundles of arrows in reserve! However, from what I heard from General Reuben, it seems that there were not that many arrows! On top of that, the Imperial Order states that the walls of all first-class fortresses must be 12 meters high. However, when I entered the city, I wondered to myself. Why are the walls so short? It seems like they are less than 10 meters high.”

Rody spoke extremely slowly. Fedol listened fearfully as he turned ghastly pale. When he heard the last sentence, he instinctively tried to defend himself and said, “What do you mean less than 10 meters high? It is obviously 10 meters high!” The moment he uttered those words, he realized he had messed things up. He immediately started to tremble in fear.

Ferara who was watching him cursed the bungling oaf endlessly in his heart. He made up his mind to replace that useless bungling oaf if he managed to survive the ordeal.

Ferara’s face immediately changed. He no longer smiled as he looked at Rody and gritted his teeth. “Since Your Excellency has already explained himself, I will not say any more unnecessary things! Fedol and I are willing to contribute 100,000 gold coins for the military expenditure! I hope Your Excellency will be pleased!”

Rody sighed and then he smiled and said, “I thank you two for your loyalty to the nation!”

After the conversation, they returned to the dinner celebration. Rody also stopped acting. He put to use the etiquette lessons he learned in the Imperial Capital. He walked and laughed gracefully

as a young noble. Exactly what would be expected from an influential noble family.

Everyone enjoyed themselves to the fullest. Although there were some who felt that the duke's attitude was different and strange, they assumed it was natural for someone from one of the most powerful families in the Imperial Capital to be arrogant.

Rody was a little drunk. His bodyguards had already gone back. Rody was snickering with Andy in his mind all the way back.

“Andy, thanks for your help earlier. I did not expect there to be so much trouble dealing with them.”

Andy replied in disdain, “You better be satisfied that I helped you earn 100,000 gold coins today. There were so many weaknesses in your speech just now. That fat guy almost saw the flaws.”

Rody laughed. “I have never understood these things. Thank you for secretly telling me what to say and what to do. There were a lot of times I did not know what to say and could only show them a fierce face to scare them. If it was not for your guidance, I am afraid I might have been exposed.”

Andy snickered, “Boy, what do you think about casually earning 100,000 gold coins over dinner?”

Rody was silent for a moment before he lightly replied, “Nauseating!”

Andy coldly said, “This is the temptation of power and position. Right now, you are just not used to it. Whatever it is, the first step is already successful. The rest is up to you. I can help you with planning but when it comes to the execution, I cannot do anything.”

Reuenthal was at Redwood Base and had sent out scouts to discreetly inquire about the situation at Watt Fortress. For a few days, he only found cavalymen guarding craftsmen to strengthen the defense. Even the trees in a few groves were cut down and

wood was carted back to the city. The craftsmen were busy reinforcing the walls. Within two days, the fortress was surrounded by cheval de frise, an anti-personnel barrier in the form of a wooden frame covered with long wooden spikes. The barriers were placed all around the fortress walls.

After that, cavalrymen were dispatched to the surrounding villages to buy provisions. The nearby civilians were also escorted to the city. Without any doubt, it was a preparation to defend.

Reuenthal had secretly dispatched two cavalries to harass them but the Duke of the Tulip Family seemed to be extremely powerful. The 'Lightning God's Whip' was on standby and engaged Reuenthal's cavalries. In the end, Reuenthal's cavalries were defeated.

Reuenthal laughed bitterly in his heart as he observed the situation. A secret report from his spy in the Imperial Capital told him that the reinforcements, the Central Cavalry, only had 20,000 soldiers. Although the Duke of the Tulip Family moved very quickly and had managed to launch a surprise attack before Reuenthal obtained the intelligence, Reuenthal noted that the military strength of his opponent was smaller than his own. Even if the Empire wanted to mobilize the Southern Legion, the Empire would still need another 2 months.

On the other hand, his earlier request to the Great Moon Kingdom for a cavalry of 100,000 would arrive within two days. Reuenthal came to a decision that he had to reduce the enemy's strength even if he would suffer huge losses. Although siege battle was a headache for him, he had an unlimited supply of soldiers. If it was a fight of attrition, he was 90% sure that he would win.

The only thing that made Reuenthal furious was the people of the Roland Continent who were just resting in his barracks. The special envoy of the Roland Continent could not be seen at all. Before the war, he had promised a large number of sorcerers as reinforcements but the promise was not kept. Instead, there were

10,000 cavalymen and all of them refused to go out and fight. The cavalymen claimed that they were only under orders to protect the special envoy and would not join in the battles. That made Reuenthal extremely angry but he could not say anything.

The 10,000 remaining Central Cavalry soldiers and the 2,000 Imperial Guards led by Commander Gordon finally arrived at Watt Fortress. Everyday, Rody would convene with Sieg, Gordon and those involved at the garrison to discuss military matters. He did not meet with the other commanders, or discuss other official matters or visit the barracks.

Everyone felt that the young Duke of the Tulip Family was an eccentric person. According to a few soldiers in the garrison, the duke usually liked to hide in his own room and talked to himself. Apparently, it was as if the young duke was arguing with someone.

After Reuenthal had restrained himself for two days, the Great Moon Kingdom's reinforcements of 100,000 arrived at Redwood Base. Reuenthal who had ordered his army to prepare themselves for the past two days suddenly gave the order to launch a second attack on Watt Fortress.

Reuenthal left 50,000 cavalymen behind to guard Redwood Base. He then led the other 200,000 men in a majestic march formation stretching over 5 li. Reuenthal knew that he was unable to conduct a surprise attack so he openly set out for this attack. Since he had suffered badly the last time, he scattered his scouts wide to acquire information as a precaution in case of a surprise attack by the enemy.

That day when he arrived at the fortress, the previously open barren land outside the walls was now covered with barriers. Reuenthal gritted his teeth when he saw the wooden spikes on the barriers, the tall reinforced walls plus the rolling logs and stones on the walls.

How many soldiers must I sacrifice to capture Watt Fortress?

Reuenthal started his preparation. He ordered 2,000 suicide soldiers to dismantle the cheval de frise. On the first day, those 2,000 soldiers were either killed or seriously injured. From the walls, arrows fell like rain towards the cheval de frise which was within range. The demolition of each barrier would cost the lives of two or three soldiers. Reuenthal had given the order for the archers to return fire but the enemy's magicians blocked the arrows.

After two full days, more than half of the fortifications were removed. However, Reuenthal had already lost more than 6,000 soldiers and could only stomp his feet in anger.

Reuenthal had 200,000 soldiers. Although the size of his army was much bigger than his enemy's, the daily consumption of provisions was also enormous. The Great Moon Kingdom was originally located in the grasslands but it was not a suitable location to grow grains. They had to spend two years to accumulate enough provisions for this invasion. As a result, Reuenthal who was feeling anxious could only order his soldiers to charge forward regardless of the losses.

Unfortunately, thousands of his soldiers were shot dead by arrows before they could even approach the walls of the city. The arrows used were merely wooden arrows. However, the arrows had amazing power when they were shot by thousands of archers. Their shields may have been big but those who were trying to dismantle the fortifications could not always hold up their shields.

Reuenthal sat on his horse as he looked at the Tulip Family's banner from afar and felt extremely agitated. Reuenthal grew up in the grasslands but he was an ambitious guy. When he was young, he would sneak into the Empire alone and secretly learn the art of war of the Radiant Empire. Naturally, he had a particularly profound impression of the Tulip Family. He had always treated the Tulip Family as the imaginary future enemy. Now that he was actually fighting the Tulip Family, he felt depressed.

Seeing another 1,000 of his soldiers die after being shot by arrows, he immediately roared loudly for the next 1,000 soldiers to move up.

At that moment, a cavalryman approached from behind. The cavalryman of the Great Moon Kingdom was covered in blood. He held a red ox bone which was the symbol for urgency.

He quickly rushed to the front of Reuenthal. After that, he jumped down from his horse and staggered. The horse behind him had used the last of its strength. It neighed sorrowfully before it fell dead on the ground. The cavalier held the red ox bone over his head and sobbed.

“Your Highness, the Radiant Empire’s Central Cavalry had split into two groups and attacked us! Within two days, they rode over 1,000 li and wiped out our 17 tribes! They... they are about to attack the Dragon Plateau! His Majesty has ordered you to go back to aid them!”

Reuenthal shouted loudly, “What? How many people do they have? What banner are they flying!”

The bloodsoaked cavalryman gasped for breath and said, “Number of soldiers unknown... They fly the... Tulip Family’s banner!”

Reuenthal's vision suddenly turned black for a moment. His trembled and almost fell off his horse. A few of his trusted subordinates quickly stepped forward and supported him. Reuenthal felt both frightened and furious. He was known for his skills in conducting raids and did not expect his enemy to attack his own home.

He quickly regained his composure, sitting on his horse, while the surrounding soldiers looked at him. He slowly calmed himself down and asked, “How did they get behind us? What about the garrison at Redwood Base? Did they not discover them as well?”

That cavalryman breathed heavily and was terrified but he managed to continue, "They must have made a detour. All the scouts they encountered were killed! There were no survivors! That is why they were only discovered after they have crossed the borders! They continued without stopping. They did not take any prisoners and killed everyone so..."

Reuenthal became furious and shouted, "What about the defenders at Redwood Base? I left 50,000 cavaliers there! Since there is news, why did they not send anyone to pursue?"

"They already dispatched soldiers but the news came too late! The enemy had already rushed into the grasslands!"

Reuenthal took a deep breath and calmed down. After that, he asked again, "What about the cavalrymen from Roland? What are they doing?"

"The special envoy from Roland said they were duty bound to help and pursued along with our soldiers!"

"Oh?" Reuenthal did not expect that answer. He closed his eyes and contemplated for a moment. After that, he opened his eyes and ordered 10,000 cavalrymen to guard the rear while the rest of the army immediately retreated. He personally led 30,000 cavalrymen and rushed to the aid of the Great Moon Kingdom.

At the same time, in the Northwest near the Great Moon Kingdom grassland, a cavalry in full body armor and lances in their hands rode quickly. They had just found several large horseshoe prints. After counting the number of prints, they estimated that their opponents only had about 10,000 soldiers. The team leader immediately gave the order for a full speed chase.s

Riding in front on top of a red horse, was the special envoy of the Roland Continent. He was still in his black robe and wearing a black veil. Riding his horse quickly, his mind was set on the secret orders given to him by the eagle the night before.

“At all costs, kill the Duke of the Tulip Family!”

龙台金帐(lóng tái jīn zhàng): 龙台 is 'dragon plateau' and 金帐 is 'Golden Horde'. The Golden Horde, in real life, was an ancient Mongolian kingdom. As 龙台金帐 is obviously a place name, I have chosen to use 'Dragon Plateau' because the full name 'Dragon Plateau Golden Horde' is too long. Another reason is, in the chinese text 龙台金帐 sounds beautiful, but in english the literal translation 'Dragon Plateau Golden Horde' is kind of clumsy.

Chapter 77: Blood Oath

In the grassland, there were no mountains. No matter where you looked, you would see a large and empty space. Such a special area was the best location for pastures. As such, even the women and the children could ride horses in the grassland. This inherently favorable condition was considered the source of strength of the Great Moon Kingdom's cavalry.

Unfortunately, the location also had a fatal flaw.

The grassland had no mountains which meant that there were no metallic materials in the area. They also had little lumber. So even though the cavalry of the Great Moon Kingdom was strong, they could not be fully equipped. Reuenthal was a rare and capable man who had traveled around the continent and studied military tactics to make their cavalry more powerful. Despite that, their equipment was unfortunately still behind the times.

Without sufficient iron, they were unable to equip a heavy cavalry. Without sufficient stones and wood, they were unable to build city walls and towns. As a result, the Great Moon Kingdom had no defense lines in the grasslands. Their whole nation was porous and accessible everywhere and was completely undefended.

Rody's strategy was really simple. That day, Commander Gordon arrived at the city and entered through the front gate along with his remaining 10,000 soldiers. After that, Rody took 10,000 of his own men and 10,000 of the Northwest Legion's remaining cavalrymen out of Watt Fortress through the back gate. The 20,000 cavalrymen were split into two groups. They used small paths to avoid the fortresses which had been captured by Reuenthal such as the Loulan Fortress and the Trier Fortress.

The Central Cavalry was naturally led by Rody while the 10,000 Northwest Legion cavalrymen were led by one of their commanders, Giesslunt. The two armies were like sharp knives

heading straight for the Great Moon Kingdom's grasslands. They rushed all the way without stopping. When they encountered an enemy, the enemy was completely routed. There were no survivors.

Reuenthal might have dispatched a lot of mounted scouts to Watt Fortress but it did not work out as planned. While the fortifications for the fortress were still being constructed, Reuben in accordance with Rody's orders had dispatched Gordon and his men to attack in small squads. That act had diverted Reuenthal's attention. When scouts were reported missing, he believed that those scouts had gone too close to the fortress and were killed by the defenders.

Taking this opportunity, the Empire's 20,000-strong cavalry did not rest and rushed straight for the Great Moon Kingdom's Dragon Plateau!

The foreigners of the grasslands were generally nomads. They lived as tribes of different sizes and were scattered all over the place. However, after the founding of the Great Moon Kingdom, the tribes unified and listened to the orders of those at the Dragon Plateau.

Rody also exterminated several grassland tribes. Most of the young men had already been recruited by Reuenthal. Although the people of the grasslands were brave, those left behind were either old and weak or women and children. How could they fight against the Radiant Empire's fully equipped cavalry? Rody did not kill the helpless. His attack was only to confuse Reuenthal. He wanted to wreak havoc in the heart of the Great Moon Kingdom. The more chaotic, the better. The Great Moon Kingdom's armed forces were naturally eliminated when spotted. But the old, the weak, the women and the children were spared. Rody also ordered to leave behind a small amount of provision for them. The other possessions of the tribes, the tents, goats, or cattle were all gathered and burned. This was a stratagem taught by Andy.

The Great Moon Kingdom had used its unique advantage to form an army of 200,000 cavalrymen. However, their total population was less than a million. Most of their cavalrymen usually just pastured their herds on normal days. Since they were good at horse riding, they could easily become a cavalryman with just a little training. But their economic production was almost zero. From all the grazing they did, their only riches were the livestock, cattle, and horses. Destroying all those was a big blow to the Great Moon Kingdom.

According to Andy, if Rody really wanted to be cruel, he should have massacred everyone regardless if they were old, women or children. As the Great Moon Kingdom's population was not big, killing them would be a serious blow to the Great Moon Kingdom and would weaken their national strength. Assuming that the women and children were killed, even if they had 200,000 young men in the front lines, those young men would not be able to sire children for the future generations. It was the best strategy if a person wanted the Radiant Empire's cavalry of 20,000 to defeat the Great Moon Kingdom. Even if the Great Moon Kingdom started to encourage more births, a child would still need more than 10 years to grow into an adult. By that time, the Great Moon Kingdom's population would no longer be able to be restored.

This ruthless stratagem was used once by the late Duke of the Tulip Family during Abbas the Great's reign. The grassland foreigners suffered huge losses and could not recover for decades.

However, Rody was young and would absolutely not use such a cruel method. Although he did not kill all the tribesmen, he ordered to kill all their herds and horses. The soldiers drove the animals into the stockades and burned them all. Without their herds and horses, the tribes would only collapse. Since the Great Moon Kingdom was the unification of those various tribes, losing one tribe would also mean weakening the Great Moon Kingdom's strength.

So within a few days, the two cavalries swept away more than 10 tribes and caused fear in the grasslands.

As for the Dragon Plateau, Rody knew that it was best not to attack that place even if he had the chance. Although most of the enemies were away, the main base would still have tens of thousands of enemies. To attack an enemy several times their size would only happen if they had lost their minds.

As long as he continued to attack for a few more days, Reuenthal would likely retreat.

After non-stop running for three days other than the occasional rest needed by the horses, the soldiers could no longer sit properly on their saddles. Although the 'Lightning God's Whip' were tired, they managed to support themselves as a result of their rigorous training. However, after two days, it felt like there were people pursuing them. This unnerved Rody. In that kind of location, the enemy could easily catch up in a day. In the wilderness, it would be hard to defend themselves. Although the Central Cavalry were elites, after several days of fighting, they would have a higher possibility of losing.

Besides, their pursuers seemed to be skilled at tracking. They appeared to be getting closer and closer with each passing day. It was also difficult to hide their tracks in the wide grasslands. If the enemy outflanked them, there would be a high chance of being completely routed.

The past few days had progressed smoothly. Rody, while being chased by the pursuers ran in a circle in the grasslands. He looked at the sky and then he ordered the army to divide into three teams with 3,000 in each team. They then split up and ran towards the borders.

The pursuers were caught by surprise when Rody split his army into three. The pursuers were actually cavalries sent out by the Dragon Plateau. The commander of the cavalry was not flexible

with his tactics and panicked for a bit. He did not dare divide his troops so he took a chance and randomly picked one of the directions to continue the pursuit.

Rody led 3,000 of his army and ran for about half a day. He then noticed that he was still being chased. Without panicking, he further divided his army into three teams, each having 1,000 soldiers. Again, the three teams ran in three different directions.

The commander of the pursuers from the Great Moon Kingdom was frustrated and he cursed the people of the Empire for being so sly. After that, he once again randomly picked a direction to pursue.

After chasing for another half a day, the sky turned dark. A soldier reported to him that the enemy had again divided his army into 10 teams and ran in 10 different directions. The commander of the Great Moon Kingdom was stunned and his mind went blank.

He was one of the Great Moon Kingdom's most famous and valiant generals. Unfortunately, bravery was not going to save him from deceit and he was left feeling confused. He was at a lost, so he could only randomly choose one of the directions to pursue.

After dividing his army several times more, Rody was left with 100 soldiers. These were all his elite bodyguards. However, his luck was not so good. His pursuers seemed intent on chasing his team. Despite splitting up several times, the enemy still managed to track his group. Rody could not help but sigh.

Splitting up after the raid was a tactic he had decided to use. The first purpose was to confuse his pursuers. Without knowing how many soldiers Rody had, the pursuers would not dare divide their forces to pursue. After Rody's army split up a few times, the pursuers were eventually aware of the size of his army. However, by that time it was too late. After the army was split up into several smaller teams, they would not be easily intercepted. As long as they could escape the grasslands, they could regroup at Watt

Fortress. Relying on the strengths of the cavalry, it was the best way to withdraw. Finally, it would also minimize losses in the event that a group was caught.

It was by luck that Rody's group was still being chased. The horses were also starting to slow down. Although the horses were being prompted to run, they were feeling tired after running for a few days. The horses did rest occasionally but they were still getting weaker as time passed by. Rody looked around and saw that his men were also prompting their horses to run faster but like him, their speed had dropped.

Suddenly, there was a cry of alarm as Rody's horse gave a sad neigh and collapsed. Rody skillfully jumped off the horse but he still tumbled.

His bodyguards immediately reined in their horses nearby and jumped off their horses.

Rody saw that his horse was frothing and was no longer able to stand. He could not help but sigh. He had never expected his horse, which looked more majestic than the others to be the first to die.

The captain of the bodyguards said, "Your Excellency, please get on my horse! We will ride together!" Among 100 bodyguards, his horse seemed to be the healthiest.

Rody frowned and looked back. He could faintly see the enemy horses in the horizon.

"Your horse is also at its limit! If we both ride together, it will only collapse faster!"

The captain of the bodyguards then replied without hesitation, "In that case, Your Excellency shall ride my horse!"

"Nonsense!" Rody gave a gloomy smile and slowly said, "Everyone, the enemy has been tricked by our strategy of splitting our army. However, they are finally about to catch up to us. We may have been the unlucky team to attract the enemy pursuers but

now, our other comrades will be able to escape! Today may be the day we all die! Are you afraid?”

“We are not afraid!” The 100 people shouted in unison. Those 100 people were elites of the Wolves Fang. All of them did not fear death. Even though they were faced with a hopeless situation, none of them showed any sign of fear.

Rody nodded his head. His heart was filled with sentimental feelings as he pulled out his sword and loudly shouted, “Since we cannot run anymore, we should take advantage of what little strength we have left and fight! Even if we die, we will take down as many soldiers as we can!”

“Your Excellency!” The captain of the bodyguards said, “We are not afraid of death! However, Your Excellency must not die!”

After that, the captain of the bodyguards turned around to look at his men and spoke, “Your Excellency, please take my horse and leave first! Your subordinate will lead the army to enable Your Excellency's retreat!”

The Wolves Fang resolutely pulled out their swords and shouted, “We will cover to enable Your Excellency's retreat!”

“Cover what retreat?” Rody felt agitated and cursed. “This is not covering a retreat! This is courting death! You want me to go first but was there ever a commander who would leave his subordinates to die so that he could retreat?”

The captain of the bodyguards spoke unwaveringly, “Your Excellency, although we are a small force, we are confident enough to hold them back for some time! As the captain of Your Excellency's bodyguards, I can die without regret! Only Your Excellency can ensure the safety of hundreds of thousands in the Northwest. If anything were to happen to Your Excellency, the Northwest will no longer be able to defend itself from Reuenthal.”

Rody felt agitated and full of grief but he gritted his teeth and

shook his head.

He saw that the pursuers were getting closer and closer, enough to feel the vibration on the ground. The captain of the bodyguards also looked worried and spoke loudly, “Your Excellency, if you do not agree to this, then we will all die together! What is the difference? As long as there is a chance, Your Excellency should take care of yourself for the sake of the Wolves Fang and the Northwest Legion!” After saying that, he placed his sword at his own neck and continued, “If Your Excellency refuses to go, we will die anyway. Therefore, I might as well die in front of Your Excellency!”

When he saw that Rody was still hesitating, the bodyguard shouted again, “Your Excellency, if you do not go, you will die here! When you die, no one will be able to stop Reuenthal! I am afraid that the whole of the Northwest would be ravaged by Reuenthal’s cavalry!”

After that, all of the bodyguards also mimicked their captain and placed their swords at their necks as they looked at Rody resolutely.

Rody’s vision blurred and his throat choked. He could not even say a word. He also noticed that there were bloodstains on the captain’s neck. All of the soldiers also looked determined. If he shook his head again, blood would definitely spurt out immediately.

Rody had the personality of a tough warrior. After killing on the battlefield for several days, he also became more resolute. However, he was currently trying not to cry. Without saying anything more he got onto the captain's horse. He took out a long arrow and broke it into two before swearing, "Today, I will rely on you, brothers! If I am able to escape, I will avenge you! I will make the enemies spill their blood and turn this grassland red! If I violate this oath, I will be like this arrow!"

He bit his lips, turned around, whipped his horse and galloped away. He knew the 100 soldiers were looking at him but he did not dare to turn around. Rody was afraid that he would turn back and assist them if he did.

Once the duke was far away, the captain of the bodyguards sighed. He turned around and shouted, "Alright! Everyone, we may die here today but we must not tarnish the name of the Central Cavalry! We must not tarnish the name of the 'Lightning God's Whip'! Understand?"

100 voices shouted in unison, "Kill!" Every one of them looked determined.

The captain of the bodyguards got onto a horse and rode it together with another person.

"Line up!" Listening to the order, the 100 cavalymen formed a neat line. Although they only had 100 people, they were still imposing. They quietly waited for the enemy to arrive.

A little while later, the Great Moon Kingdom's pursuing soldiers arrived from a distance. From afar, they saw a small neatly arranged cavalry. The general of the Great Moon Kingdom's cavalry was stunned.

Have they gone mad? Are they trying to fight us with only 100 soldiers?"

Before he could decide whether he should immediately rush in and attack, he heard a powerful shout from the other side.

"Shoot!"

After that, hundreds of arrows immediately started to fly over. Many of the cavalymen from the Great Moon Kingdom were unable to react in time. They were hit by the arrows and fell off their horses. The general had quickly bent down and managed to avoid one. However, the bodyguard behind him was hit instead.

The general became furious and shouted, "Charge! Destroy these

foreign barbarians! For each head, you will be rewarded with five cattle and sheep!”

When the captain of the bodyguards saw a number of their enemies were killed by their arrows, he laughed loudly and bleakly. After that, he gave the order for the Wolves Fang to abandon their bows and arrows and to draw out their swords.

He then saw the enemies rushing over furiously while shouting, “Strier (Kill)!” The loud shout came from numerous indifferent faces which were also mixed with both greed and fear. They had many swords and spears. They approached like black clouds rolling over.

The captain of the bodyguards gave a calm smile and then he shouted loudly, “Wolves Fang!”

“Kill!” The 100 cavalrymen cried out and managed to overshadow the loud voices shouting, “Strier”. Their voices were so loud it could pierce the sky.

After that, the 100 cavalrymen charged forward. They were like a magnificent army of thousands of soldiers. Shouts of ‘kill’ were heard throughout the day until the sky turned completely dark and they were completely annihilated...

Chapter 78: Knights of Roland

Rody's legs felt numb like they were being pricked by countless needles.

After running for nearly an hour, the horse finally collapsed. It foamed at the mouth and could no longer stand. Rody was forced to continue on foot.

His sweat and tears mixed. He was desperate. A little while ago, he heard the screams of his dying men behind him and felt agitated. He almost turned around to join the fight so that he could die together with his loyal soldiers.

However, Andy constantly reminded Rody about his soldiers' resolution and how his actions of going back there would only court death. If Rody died, everything would be over. If the Duke of the Tulip Family was dead, there would be no Tulip Family banner and the Northwest Legion would immediately fall apart.

If only I wasn't the Duke of the Tulip Family but an ordinary warrior, I could just go back to my comrades and die with them...

So, he kept on moving until it was the middle of the night. Finally, he realized that the enemy cavalry stopped pursuing. The enemy probably believed that they had gotten rid of most of the soldiers after killing the bodyguards. Even though a majority of the Empire's soldiers had eluded the enemy cavalry due to the dispersion of forces, they could only retreat helplessly.

Rody could no longer continue so, he looked for a place to sit down and rest. He was out of breath as if a boulder was pressing against his body.

In Rody's expedition, among his first orders was the execution of the 10 villagers who had collaborated with the enemy. After that, it was the battle at Watt Fortress where he helped repel Reuenthal's forces. Unfortunately, his joy was short-lived. He no longer felt

joyful when he learned about the corrupt practices of the Northwest Legion. In the last few days, he had raced all the way to the Great Moon Kingdom and met the villagers there. Although he had ordered his men not to kill civilians, many still died. They were killed by the 'Lightning God's Whip' when they revolted in retaliation to their homes being burned.

No matter how powerful he was at that moment, Rody was still a young man. He might have been resolute but he was not ruthless. Although his journey had been progressing smoothly from the outset, he was not happy about the burning and killing.

Lying on the soft grass, Rody thought of many things.

Was I wrong? Is war always a matter of 'I live, you die'? Being compassionate will only make the enemy happy!

When Reuenthal invaded, he killed everyone regardless of whether they were civilians or soldiers. As a result, the entire Northwest region fell into shock and immediately ran away at the sight of the invading force. Reuenthal barely encountered any resistance. In hindsight, Rody was too weak.

When Rody thought about his loyal subordinates who were willing to sacrifice their lives just to cover his escape, he could only feel remorse.

The Great Moon Kingdom's cavalry had more than 20,000 soldiers. However, those cavalymen were all initially civilians. Who were soldiers? Who were civilians? That was something the Great Moon Kingdom did not need to differentiate. The cavalymen were herders before the war but whenever the Great Moon Kingdom gave an order, all of them could become soldiers instantly.

He felt truly wretched due to his own indecisiveness and the fact that he was clinging on to his principles.

The enemy could kill my citizens. Why couldn't I kill the enemy's

citizens?

When Rody thought of it, his blood started to boil. He quickly wiped away the tears that started to form in his eyes. He felt like screaming.

From the start of the expedition until then, he had witnessed the tragic deaths of many of his loyal subordinates. It changed Rody. The originally resolute, slightly gloomy and ignorant juvenile was gone forever.

After resting for a while, Rody calmed down. He knew that if he continued running aimlessly, it would be difficult to get out of the grasslands. He decided to head for the right direction and find a small tribe. He would then steal or snatch a horse from the tribe.

At dawn, Rody finally came across two herders who were grazing their cattle and sheep in the grasslands. One was male and the other was female. The two herders in the distance were wearing fur-lined jackets and hats. They used their long whips and special calls to move the cattle. Two wolf dogs barked continuously to help their owners corral the herd.

Rody hid among the bushes and watched for a while. He gritted his teeth as he held his sword. He crouched a little bit to stay hidden and moved quickly towards the herders.

Before the herders noticed Rody's presence, the two wolf dogs were already aware and they ran towards Rody, barking ferociously. The stronger looking dog could smell the blood on Rody's body and bared its fangs at him. Rody kicked the dog in the head, splitting its head open. The other dog shrank back in fear. Without a glance, Rody raised his scimitar and cut it into two.

The two herders were alarmed and they rushed over furiously. The male herder shouted loudly but Rody could not understand a word. Rody simply rushed towards him with his scimitar.

The people of the grasslands were valiant. The male herder

immediately put down his whip, took out a bow and arrow and shot at Rody. Rody smiled coldly and deflected the arrow with his scimitar. When he got nearer, Rody held the hilt of his scimitar with both hands and lifted it up before he slashed the male herder. Before the herder could draw his sword, there was a spurt of blood and his head flew into the sky. Rody's face felt warm as it was splashed with blood. However, he did not hesitate to pick up the bow and arrow on the ground as he rushed towards the female herder.

The female herder shrieked repeatedly but she did not run away. Instead, she took out a sword and rushed towards Rody.

Rody saw the grief on her face. At first, he turned soft but then he remembered the tragic deaths of his subordinates and thought to himself.

If I do not kill her, she will nurture their young. The cattle will also be used to replenish the enemy's strength and then they will be able to harm us.

Rody did not hesitate any longer and shot an arrow. The arrow pierced through the female herder's neck and she fell to the ground.

He looked at the two corpses on the ground. Rody felt like a bloodthirsty and ruthless man. He had to scream a few times to eliminate the choked feeling in his chest. He then grabbed a horse and quickly set off in the direction of his base.

Rody spent another day riding quickly and occasionally resting in between. In the evening, Rody finally reached a small hill at the edge of the grasslands. According to his survey before the start of the expedition, crossing the small hill would lead him out of the Great Moon Kingdom's territory. He would then arrive at the Northwest plains. In less than two days, he would be able to reach Watt Fortress. Rody's mood improved as he urged his horse to run forward.

Just before the sun set, a rumble could be heard coming from the direction of the hill. Immediately after that, a group of cavalrymen appeared and stopped in front of Rody. Rody immediately stopped his horse too as his heart sank.

The faint neighing of their horses, their dazzling armor and gleaming swords all came into view.

That cavalry only had several hundred soldiers. From a distance, he could tell that the cavalry was unlike the Great Moon Kingdom's. Most of the time, the Great Moon Kingdom's cavalry did not wear metal armor but thin leather ones instead. Some of them even wore thick leather armor with longbows hanging across their backs.

The cavalry in front of him wore heavy silver armor. Craftsmen and minerals were scarce in the grasslands which made it impossible for them to produce such good armor. Their equipment was comparable to the ones worn by the Empire's most elite cavalry, the 'Lightning God's Whip'. Across their backs were not bows and arrows but strange cross-shaped swords. They each held a sharp spear, which flashed under the sunlight in one hand and a large shield with a cross-shaped symbol in the middle in the other hand.

The cavalry did not immediately rush at him but slowly moved into a battle formation. They were very different from the shoddy cavalry of the grasslands. Hundreds of soldiers arranged themselves neatly to form a thick wall with their shields. Although there were openings in between the shields, the front and rear were closely packed together to form layers of defense. They had already begun to surround Rody from a distance

.

One of the cavalrymen slowly approached and shouted loudly, "Honorable cavalryman of the Radiant Empire, please dismount and hand over your weapons!" The words were spoken in the

Empire's common language. However, the accent was a bit odd.

Rody took a deep breath. He was calm and unafraid. As he had been experiencing a lot of life and death situations for the past few days, he did not panic at all. Rody coldly shouted back, "Who are you guys?! Are you from the Great Moon Kingdom?"

They were dumbfounded when they heard Rody's question. The cavalry asked Rody to hand over his weapons again and slowly moved forward a few steps in a slightly intimidating manner.

Rody sneered, "What if I am unwilling?"

The other side no longer spoke. With one order, their formation slowly shifted. Their half-moon shaped formation started to push forward. Rody knew that they were preparing to charge. A cavalry cannot start a charge by immediately running fast. They have to start running slowly for a few steps for the horse to warm up before sprinting for maximum efficiency.

The horse that Rody took from the herders was not a war horse. It sensed the cavalry's murderous aura and approaching crisis due to its natural instincts. It gave a troubled neigh as it slowly backed away.

The cavalry on the other side suddenly shouted with their spears in the air. They then pointed their spears at Rody but kept their formation.

Rody's horse was startled and it suddenly started to neigh loudly...

Chapter 79: Holy Light

Rody sighed and dismounted. He knew that a horse without any special training would be unable to handle all the fighting on a battlefield. If he insisted on riding that horse, it would eventually be frightened and possibly throw him off. It would then be too late to turn around and escape. The ordinary horse had also been running for an entire day and was exhausted. On the other hand, his opponents had hundreds of excellent horses. Escaping was certainly impossible.

The other side saw him dismount and once again repeated their earlier demands for him to surrender together with his weapons. Rody felt contempt in his heart but he did not speak. He just held his sword proudly and looked at his opponents with the full intent to fight.

The leader of the cavalry saw his posture and knew that he was not willing to surrender. He found it strange that a small, dropout cavalryman from the Radiant Empire was brave enough to pick a fight with several hundred of his soldiers.

They were Royal Knights brought by the special envoy of the Roland Continent. A few days ago, they had received the secret order to kill the Tulip Family Duke. After that, they had followed the horse's tracks and chased him for half a day. They had even overtaken the soldiers dispatched from Dragon Plateau.

The special envoy of the Roland Continent had reflected on the events of the past few days. He guessed that the only way to get rid of pursuers in such an open and exposed grassland was to split up the army into smaller groups several times. It was of course to confuse the pursuers and to make them pursue a much-reduced number of the army. His ability and wisdom, however, were not like those in the Great Moon Kingdom who only knew how to swing their swords and ride horses. Without hesitation, he had immediately ordered his men to scatter into more than 100 groups

to look for the whereabouts of the Tulip Family Duke. At the same time, he had left a magical mark on the leader of each team so that he would immediately be aware if they found anything. The group of soldiers in front of Rody was one of the 100 groups sent out to intercept him. However, they did not know that he was the 'Duke' of the Tulip Family.

They thought the Duke of the Tulip Family would naturally have many cavalymen but this soldier was just by himself.

The captain found it very strange. The opponent was alone and had even dismounted. As a result, he did not panic. He did not order a cavalry charge. Instead, he intended to slowly move his men towards Rody. He had 200 soldiers with him and could easily squeeze Rody to death if he wanted to.

His decision to not order a charge was his biggest mistake. Had he ordered the 200 cavalymen in heavy armor to charge, even Rody would not have been able to withstand it no matter how strong he was.

Rody saw them slowly approaching and knew that they underestimated him because he was alone. He gave a wry smile knowing that it was not his lucky day. If only he knew that he would not be able to escape, he would have been better off dying with his men that day.

Gritting his teeth, he slowly stretched his hand and pulled out something hanging around his neck. After that, he pinched the object in his hands. It was the life-saving crystal gem that Old Mark had given him.

The captain of the Roland cavalry saw Rody throwing away his sword and taking out a thinner one from behind. He found it strange but admired Rody's courage. However, he also thought that Rody might not have been quite right in the head. Against enemies wearing heavy armor, it was not a good move to throw away a thicker sword and use a long, thin sword instead.

Isn't he asking to die?

Suddenly, the captain of the Roland cavalry saw an extremely bright light in front of him. The long sword in the hands of the Empire's cavalryman dazzled. A faint sound could be heard as the cavalryman suddenly burst into a pale gold flaming aura. He looked like a person surrounded by flames. Rody gave off a tremendous invisible pressure from a distance. His enemies just stood there as the flaming aura seemed to surround them. With intense power radiating from Rody, the grass around him bent outwards. Rody's long and blonde hair also fluttered as the wind rose. The scene was surreal as though he was standing in a space between heaven and earth.

Suddenly, Rody screamed and rushed forward. His body moved as fast as a speeding horse. Rody's charge was like a fireball rushing towards the Roland cavalymen. There was a loud clang as Rody collided with the cavalry's shields. The men did not have time to react or even cry out. After Rody broke their shields, he proceeded to attack them...

Without waiting for their captain's orders, they fiercely thrust their spears at Rody. However, when their spears collided with Rody's lightsaber, more than a dozen of the spears broke into two without any sound of collision. The cavalymen felt like they were struck by lightning as they spat out blood and fell off their horses. While he was still in shock, the captain of the cavalry shouted. The surrounding cavalymen drew their swords and rushed again at Rody who was in the center.

Each time Rody swung his sword, several spears would be broken and several cavalymen would fall tragically from their horses. Some of them lost their arms while others lost their heads. Out of nowhere, Rody punched the horse of a nearby cavalryman. The horse neighed as both the horse and the person sitting on it flew away. They then smashed into another soldier. A few of them dismounted and tried to fight Rody with their cross-shaped

swords. However, they could not do anything as their shields shattered into pieces when they tried to block his attack. They also simultaneously exploded from the waist up. Their limbs were broken and badly mangled.

Under Rody's sword, their silver armor was like paper and completely useless against Rody.

Rody was like a mad tiger. Occasionally, his enemies would be able to pierce his shoulder or cut his arm with their spears. The cuts were deep enough to see his bones but he did not flinch. He would immediately claim their life with his lightsaber. Anyone whom Rody encountered would immediately be killed without leaving behind a complete corpse.

The cavalry's captain went pale as he stood on the other side. He suddenly threw away his shield and spear. He then pulled out his cross-shaped sword and jumped down from his horse. He fell on one knee along holding the sword in his hands and started to sweat as he muttered an incantation. After that, he stood up and his body also started to give out a brilliant light.

He knew the fighting energy that he was using would not last long. In fact, his body was still unable to adapt to it properly. However, he came to the Radiant Empire even though it was dangerous so that he could protect the special envoy. The high-level warriors of the Royal Knights were given a spell of blessing by the sorcerers. At any critical moment, they could chant an incantation and pray to God. Instantly, their strength would be doubled.

Another head flew and rolled away. The Roland cavalymen were just mortals. Although they had their dignity as knights which prompted them to rush in and fight, they had also noticed that more than half of them were already killed. On the other hand, their opponent stood there like the God of Death. He had a tremendous murderous aura. Rody was like a rock surrounded by corpses. He was just injured but it looked like he was totally

unaffected by his injuries.

The cavalrymen were finally terrified. Honor was one thing but a meaningless death was another.

After being bathed in blood, nobody dared to rush forward anymore. The earth was filled with dead bodies and broken weapons. The other soldiers looked at Rody's blood covered body like he was a ghost. They were too afraid to attack him.

Rody knew that he did not have much time. If he did not get rid of them within two hours, he would die. Since they did not dare attack him, Rody rushed towards the nearest group of cavalrymen.

Rody moved like a meteor and crashed into a cavalryman, hitting him on the head and tragically killing him instantly. The other Roland cavalrymen once again summoned their courage to rush towards Rody. All of a sudden Rody's sword gave out a blinding light again. The light extended until it was as tall as a person and immediately slashed downwards.

The light was like a large fire dragon. Rody instantaneously cut down the cavalryman in front of him into two. The 20 cavalrymen and their horses were immediately torn apart when they were hit by the light. A ditch of about a dozen meters long formed on the ground and looked like someone had plowed the land.

Rody then swung his lightsaber in a circular manner, cutting the soldiers surrounding him at the waist. However, his shoulder was also severely injured. The golden flames around Rody were extremely powerful. The soldiers who attacked him using their cross-shaped swords felt like they were cutting a stone. Although Rody was not invulnerable, his arm which should have been severed was only wounded when they slashed him. It was as if Rody barely felt any pain at that moment. He did not even groan. In response, he slashed back cutting everything into half. Rody's eyes were red as he continued to brandish his sword against the terrified cavalrymen.

Rody slashed again but this time there was a sound of metal clashing. There was a large cross-shaped sword blocking Rody's lightsaber. Everyone had been fighting for so long but it was the first time someone was able to block Rody's attack.

The captain's body suddenly shook. His hands trembled as he held his cross-shaped sword. He felt like he was just knocked by a speeding horse and took a few steps back. He took a deep breath and then he swallowed the blood in his mouth. After that, he gave a big roar and continued to rush forward.

Rody desperately wanted to get rid of all of them. So, when someone rushed towards him he naturally faced the person head-on. However, he heard the sound of metal clashing. The captain stepped back with a pale face. A trace of fresh blood could be seen flowing out of his mouth. The white glow of fighting energy emanating from his body started to dim. His wide, cross-shaped sword had started to crack and his clenched hands were filled with blood. It appeared that his purlicue had a deep cut.

The nearby cavalrymen saw that their captain was injured. Even though they knew that they would die if they helped him, they rushed forward.

"Stay back!" The captain shouted; his hair disheveled. The firmness in his voice dropped as he spat out blood. He gritted his teeth and continued shouting, "Do not court death!"

He stood straight and switched hands to hold the hilt of his sword before hissing, "Who are you?" His voice was low. He then glanced at the red bloodstained family crest on Rody's chest. His body trembled and he blurted out, "You are the Duke of the Tulip Family!"

Without waiting for Rody to reply, the captain shouted, "This is the Duke of the Tulip Family! Men, this is the time to defend your dignity as knights! Capture him! Do not let him escape!"

After that, the rest of the Roland cavalrymen jumped down from

their horses. They threw away their spears and took out their swords. They knew how fearsome their foe was and riding a horse would affect their agility. They had no choice but to give up their horses.

Standing in the encirclement, Rody felt anxious. Even if he could kill all of them, he probably would not be able to escape very far. It seemed like the ability to fight thousands of enemies on the battlefield was just a myth. With the explosive power he had just obtained, Rody was arguably as strong as a master in the Empire. Yet, he was already struggling with just a few hundred soldiers. If he were to encounter a thousand enemies, death would be inevitable.

Their pitiful voices could constantly be heard. Despite hearing the order, the cavalymen still fought fully aware of the high possibility of death. Rody was covered with numerous wounds, blood and also chunks of flesh from those whom he had killed. He was injured by the captain and wanted to return the favor but another soldier blocked his way. In the end, the captain picked up a spear and threw it towards Rody's chest. However, Rody's armor which was handed down the Tulip Family through generations was a strange armor. The spear hit Rody's body but it did not pierce through the armor. Rody felt the pain in his chest and he groaned. He then slashed back and finally severed the captain's hand.

Flesh and blood flew all over the place. No matter how the Roland cavalymen risked their lives, they only had 200 people at the end of the day. After suffering heavy casualties, they were getting weaker. On the other hand, Rody's momentum showed no sign of stopping. He could still kill one soldier with every two swings of the Half Moon Slash. The cavalymen were getting desperate.

Even if a master did what Rody did, he or she would not have been able to hold out so long fighting with so many soldiers. By

then, any power and fighting energy should have long been exhausted. However, they saw that Rody's pale gold flame did not show any signs of dimming. On the contrary, more of their companions were dead. All that was left were several people who could barely stand.

Rody gasped for breath. Even though he had unlimited internal energy for two hours, his physical body could still feel tired. He had killed so many people and was exhausted to the bone. However, he kept a resolute expression as he looked at the last few enemies in front of him.

The captain whose hand was severed had long been pulled to the back. At that moment, he looked around and saw that only a few out of his 200 soldiers remained. He felt heartbroken.

The killer devil in front of him walked slowly towards him and his soldiers. Even with swords in their hands, they slowly backed away.

Rody then took a deep breath and spoke, "I do not have any hatred against you. However, you came to obstruct me. You all came to court death so, do not blame me!"

The captain laughed cynically and said, "The Duke of the Tulip Family is truly terrifying! However, we came here with the sole purpose of killing you! I have already sent a signal. Our leader is on his way here! Although your fighting energy is amazing, it is definitely not a match for our leader! We have delayed you for more than an hour. It should suffice!" After that, he shouted, "Everyone, show your loyalty to His Majesty and defend your dignity as knights!"

With a roar, a few more cavalrymen rushed towards him. Rody sighed, closed his eyes and continued to kill until there was silence.

Seeing that nobody was alive, Rody felt his body getting weaker and he almost sat down on the ground. He knew that he had almost reached the time limit. He would need to leave the place

and find somewhere safe to temporarily hide.

With much effort, he ran towards a horse left behind by his enemies. He first took one of the leather flasks to get a drink. As he was about to mount the horse, he heard a thundering sound from the sky above him.

Turning around, he saw that black clouds covered the starry sky. The clouds also seemed to be dropping lower and lower. In the sky was a figure flying quickly. The figure was wrapped in silver flames and the clouds appeared to be moving away from the figure.

After a short while, the figure stopped about 10 meters above him.

The figure wore a black robe and mask. He floated effortlessly in the air. Accompanied by the rolling clouds and faint thunder, the scene looked a bit divine.

He looked at the scattered bodies in the surrounding area. He looked both surprised and angry. He then spoke in a loud and cold voice, "Did you kill all these people?"

Rody was shocked. He had never actually seen people flying freely in the air. Although the high-level magicians in the Empire could hover in the air, they could not create such a display.

Rody clenched his jaw. He took out his lightsaber again and the golden flames suddenly ignited. He stood on the grassland and glared at the person in the sky. He then loudly replied, "It is me! Who are you? Are you their leader?"

The person in the black mask looked at the golden flames around Rody with surprise. "I did not expect you to be able to comprehend the 'Holy Light' energy! No wonder these people could not defeat you. You must be Radiant Empire's Duke of the Tulip Family right?"

Rody coldly replied, "Correct! Now, who are you?"

A burst of laughter came from the sky and then the person said,

“Good! The Duke of the Tulip Family, I have finally found you! I am the Black Veil Temple’s Saint of the Roland Continent, Muse!”

Chapter 80: Black Veiled Saint

Muse saw the lightsaber in Rody's hands. He then stretched open his arms and coldly said, "Do you still want to fight me? Although you comprehend the 'Holy Light' energy, you cannot defeat me. You are better off throwing away your sword."

Rody laughed and shouted, "What a foolish saint! Do you think you are really extraordinary just because you can fly?" After he said that, he took a spear from the ground and threw it into the air as hard as he could with one hand.

The spear was like lightning piercing through the sky. It turned silver and flew straight at Muse.

Muse merely looked at it. He did not attempt to dodge. Instead, he slowly raised his hand and stretched out his index finger. A magnificent layer of silver light then appeared to stop the spear. When the spear struck the curtain of light, it produced a sound similar to metal clashing. After that, the spear broke into numerous fragments.

"You cannot defeat me, Duke of the Tulip Family," Muse's voice was cold and indifferent. It sounded like he was just stating simple facts.

Rody felt disheartened but he was stubborn. He held on to his lightsaber and the golden flame around his body rose. After that, a huge light emanated from the sword and extended towards the sky where Muse was.

Muse showed a trace of astonishment and his eyes slowly widened. A silver and transparent ball of light surrounded him. Rody's Half Moon Slash struck the ball of light and fell apart. The dazzling light radiated all over the sky. It was so dazzlingly bright that people who saw it could not have opened their eyes. The wind generated by it also blew away the dark clouds.

After the dazzling light disappeared Muse's ball of light was still undamaged.

Muse looked down callously and put down his hands. The ball of light then grew dim and dispersed.

“You still do not understand? You cannot defeat me. You are just a low-level practitioner who has just started practicing the ‘Holy Light’ energy. How dare you challenge the strength of a saint!”

Rody also felt extremely surprised. His strongest attack did not manage to hurt his opponent at all. Feeling anxious, he shouted, “Nonsense! I am a warrior of the Empire! Either I die, or I kill you! Do you want me to surrender?”

Andy was also feeling dispirited and spoke to Rody in his mind, “You fool! Run quickly! He is much stronger than you!” However, Rody did not seem to hear Andy and kept looking at the silhouette in the sky.

Muse nodded and lightly said, “I wanted to kill you but I also wanted to see the power of the Empire’s God of War. Your strength has already reached the stage where you are about to comprehend ‘Domain Force’. Unfortunately, you met me.”

After he finished talking, Muse raised his arms as if he wanted to embrace the sky. The silver flames around his body became brighter until it finally engulfed his entire body.

The clouds moved closer like they were attracted to the silver flames. The more the clouds gathered, the bigger they became and the lower they got. When the clouds collided there was lightning and a faint sound of thunder.

A ruthless voice in the air slowly said, “To my Gods, answer my call and summon lightning!”

Andy only had time to shout in Rody’s mind, “Not good!”

Rody raised his lightsaber with both arms to protect his head. His body adopted a horse stance.

Suddenly, there was a thunderous sound as a powerful lightning flashed down from the clouds in the sky. The lightning felt like the gigantic axe of the gods. It cleaved Rody's lightsaber with such a fierce force.

A huge flame appeared across the vast grasslands together with the roaring sound of thunder. Everything within a 100-meter radius exploded in golden flames. Rody who stood in the middle was enveloped by the flames.

The surrounding small hills crumbled. The trees were obliterated and the soil was sent flying everywhere. Layers of the earth's surface turned upside down and everything that touched the flames turned into dust.

After the dust had settled, Rody was seen at the center of a 100-meter wide crater. The lightsaber was still in Rody's hands. It gave out a sharp but insignificant light. The light acted as a shield to protect Rody's body. Other than the spot Rody stood on, the rest of the area around him had turned into a large yellow soiled crater.

Rody's hands trembled. Fresh blood flowed out of his mouth and nose. The lightsaber in his hands suddenly cracked. The transparent blade shattered into numerous pieces. The gem on the hilt also broke into three pieces.

Rody looked pale. The golden flame around his body had already faded. Instantly, his body felt weak and he collapsed slowly. His eyes started to close and he lost consciousness.

Muse was satisfied with his performance from the sky. Although his expression could not be seen, his eyes glinted as he proudly said to himself, "No wonder the elders advised not to use the 'God's Lightning Axe' rashly. The aftermath looks terrible."

Muse looked at Rody, whose body was still intact. Muse frowned slightly. "This guy is very tough. He actually withstood the forbidden spell."

He slowly descended to Rody's side. First, he gave Rody a glance before setting his eyes on the fragmented lightsaber. Only the hilt was left. Muse took the hilt away from Rody and looked at it carefully. He furrowed his eye brows and said, "This sword is strange." He immediately kept it.

He then took another look at the unconscious Rody and frowned again. He was supposed to kill Rody and bring back his head. However, he grew up in the Temple and ever since he became a saint, he had never personally killed a person. At that moment, he did not have any soldiers with him to help chop off Rody's head. Such boorish matters were things that a person of high status like him absolutely refused to do.

Muse sighed. If he had blown Rody's body into pieces, he would have been able to avoid the problem. After thinking for a while, he smiled and said, "Although they want me to kill him, I think it is better to capture him alive. Hmph, Radiant Empire's God of War? His Excellency the Bishop claimed that he was extremely powerful but in the end the duke was not even strong enough to fight back."

Muse then stretched out his hands and a soft white light came out of his hands. Rody's body floated in the air as his numerous wounds started to heal. Even the blood on his body gradually disappeared.

"Finally done," Muse frowned. "Otherwise, it would be vexing to bring along such a bloodied person."

Muse sighed and searched for a clean place to sit down. After that, he closed his eyes to rest.

Not long after that, an approaching cavalry could be seen far away. Its silver armor gleamed under the moonlight. It was another group of the Roland cavalry brought by Muse. However, their numbers were much greater.

The cavalry rushed towards Muse and the soldiers dismounted. A middle-aged cavalryman who led the group stepped forward and

knelt before Muse. “Your Excellency, the Royal Knights of the Third Regiment reporting for duty!” He said loudly.

Muse slowly opened his eyes and said, “Very good! You are all not late! What about the others?”

The middle-aged cavalryman, Bia replied, “I have merged two groups together along the way here. The others who have received your message should be nearby.”

Muse sighed. “Good. All of you, get this man on a horse. After that, we will go back to our territory.” He paused for a moment before he slowly warned them, “Be careful. This man is the Duke of the Tulip Family.”

Bia was surprised. “He is the Duke of the Tulip Family?” He looked at the unconscious Rody and gave Muse a salute. “Your Excellency is truly the saint of the Temple! When we return, His Majesty will definitely bestow upon you a hefty reward!” After that, he turned around and ordered his men to carry Rody onto a horse.

After that he gave Muse a red horse and saluted, “Your Excellency, are we leaving now? Or shall we wait for the others?”

Muse looked at him for a moment and replied, “We won’t be waiting for them! We will leave immediately. The others will be able to catch up with us.” After he finished speaking, he turned the horse around and led the soldiers without looking back at them.

The Roland cavalry had 2,000 cavalymen. Taking advantage of the darkness at night, they slowly started to leave. They had completed their task. Even though they were a big group marching through the Great Moon Kingdom’s territory plus they had Muse who was extremely powerful, they still marched quickly and carefully in the night.

Muse had ordered them to hide during the day and travel during the night. It was also to avoid Reuenthal’s soldiers. They might be

allies but if Reuenthal found out that they had captured the Duke of the Tulip Family, he might have demanded to take the prisoner back as his own. As Muse wanted to take the prisoner back to the Roland Continent, he could not give the prisoner to Reuenthal.

At dawn, about 10 days after, Muse ordered the troops to rest. The troops searched for a lowlying position to stop at. They were at the edge of the grasslands. The grass there was tall and thick. One would only need to bend a little and he would be completely hidden by the grass.

After stopping for a moment, Muse examined Rody's condition. Rody was still unconscious after 10 days even though his wounds had almost healed. Muse felt that something was wrong. At first, he thought that his forbidden spell had caused him internal injury. However, after examining him with magic, he found that Rody's breathing was normal and smooth. He looked at the leather armor Rody was wearing and his heart stirred. He ordered his subordinates to remove the armor and sneered. "Looks like it was enchanted by a high ranked sorcerer. This is truly an exceptional object." After that, he handed over the armor to his cavalrymen.

Muse looked at the morning sun before turning to Bia and said, "Let us take a break. Dispatch a few people to see if there is anything suspicious."

Bia saluted respectfully. After that, he gave Muse a leather flask containing water. Muse nodded and drank a mouthful of the contents before saying, "Watch over the Duke of the Tulip Family. If you see any of Reuenthal's men, immediately hide the duke. Do not let them see him. We are in someone else's territory..."

Before he finished speaking, Muse suddenly paused. He squinted and angrily looked at Bia as well as the others.

"What drink did you give me?"

Muse dropped the leather flask. His body trembled and he struggled to stand.

Bia and several high ranking knights had already stepped back. They drew out their cross-shaped sword.

“You dare plot against me?” Muse’s voice was no longer indifferent. His eyes were seething with anger. “Why? Has Reuenthal bought you over?”

Bia stepped back vigilantly and loudly said, “Your Excellency Muse, how could I betray my own country?”

Muse coldly replied, “I am His Majesty’s Special Envoy! If you secretly harm me, wouldn’t it be considered treason?”

Bia and a few high ranking knights held their swords as they carefully surrounded Muse. After that, Bia gave a hideous grin and said, “Your Excellency., you are truly foolish. His Majesty had wanted to eliminate you for a very long time. You see, when you go back, you will take over the position of Bishop in the Temple next year. When that time comes, will the kingdom listen to the orders of His Majesty or the orders of the Temple?”

Muse smiled callously. “I see. It looks like His Majesty cannot bear the sight of the Temple and wants to eliminate us. Are you guys not afraid of the Temple? Can you defeat the Circle Knights of the Temple? Will you be able to kill the elders of the Temple?”

Bia spread out his hands and softly said, “That is not a problem I need to think about. If His Majesty the King gives the order, I will just execute it. As for your question, His Majesty will definitely have a solution.”

Muse sighed and slowly raised his hand. However, his arm felt limp and weak. He was also not able to use any sorcery. After that, he asked, “What did you make me drink?”

Bia saw that his opponent had already given up resisting and laughed loudly. “In the past 10 days, I have been giving you plain water. Your Excellency has become used to it and therefore, did not take any precaution. Today’s water is different. I added a bit of

red dragon blood.”

Muse gave a wry smile. “Red dragon blood? Do you think a little bit of red dragon blood can poison me?”

Bia simply replied, “Your Excellency, you are the Black Veiled Saint. Naturally, a bit of red dragon blood will not poison you. However, it is enough to stop your sorcery. We will send you off with our swords. Do not worry. We will send the Duke of the Tulip Family back to our territory. I am grateful to Your Excellency for giving me this merit!”

After that, he slowly approached Muse with merciless eyes.

Chapter 81: Changing Roles

Muse knew that several people were approaching him and they were about to greet him with the sharp ends of their swords. He opened his eyes wide and his glare was as sharp as a knife. Suddenly, he threw a small crystal on the ground.

The sound of the crystal breaking was heard. A blood red fog immediately appeared and started to spread. Their metal armor instantaneously burst into flames when they came into contact with the red fog. They immediately shouted and jumped.

Bia was quick and immediately leaped a few steps back. He saw the flames covering his subordinates becoming more vigorous and heard their agonizing screams.

“Hmph, ‘burning crystals’?” Bia coldly said, “Your Excellency, do you think a ‘burning crystal’ will save your life? I have 2,000 knights here. All my subordinates will obey my orders! If I were to order them to take off their metal armor and dispose of their metal weapons, your ‘burning crystal’ will be useless! Without sorcery, you are just an ordinary person! My soldiers will be able to strangle you to death! At this moment, I do not have any archers! If I did, I would order them to shoot 1,000 arrows to kill you!”

Muse secretly gritted his teeth and looked at Bia who was standing far away. He said, “You actually reminded me. Do you actually think I would only bring a small ‘burning crystal’?”

After that, Muse pulled out an egg-sized blood red crystal from his sleeve. Clenching his teeth, he smashed the crystal onto the ground. It was not easy to refine this ‘burning crystal’. The materials needed to create it were expensive and difficult to find. Muse had spent two years on the Roland Continent to refine two of such crystals. He would feel remorse if he had to use both right now.

After the crystal broke, a bigger blood red fog started to spread

out. The fog spread over a 10-meter radius and it spread faster than the previous one. Bia shouted and ran but he was too slow. His armor had touched the red fog and immediately started to combust. Fortunately, Bia was quick enough to remove his armor and he threw it away. After that, Bia rolled on the ground to extinguish the flames on his body.

Bia cursed as he looked at Muse standing safely inside the red fog. He did not have a bow and arrow so he picked up a sword from the ground and threw it inside the fog.

Muse instinctively tried to dodge but failed because his body was too weak due to the poisoning. He was not able to avoid the sword and it managed to pierce his shoulder. Bia was a high ranking knight who could use a lot of strength. The sword not only pierced Muse's shoulder but also nailed him to the ground.

The fog started to burn the metal sword and the flame started to spread towards Muse. Muse was desperate and could care less about the pain. He gripped the hilt and screamed as he pulled out the sword. He then threw the sword far away. He beat his clothes to put out the remaining flames on his body. Fortunately, he was wearing a black leather robe which would not burn up in the fog. The blood on his shoulder continued to ooze but he could not do anything.

Muse was a sorcerer. He had never felt that kind of pain before. The pain brought tears to his eyes but he knew that it was a matter of life and death. He took out a small crystal stone for sorcery and quickly sketched a magic circle on the ground with it. He looked at the Duke of the Tulip Family for a moment. Gritting his teeth, he sketched a larger circle and made sure that Rody was also in it.

When Muse bent down, his injury made him feel dizzy. However, he knew that the red fog would only hold for a while and would soon disappear. He had to act quickly.

Bia and a group of people were outside the red fog cursing

endlessly. A few cavalrymen had started to take off their equipment and prepared to rush in. Unfortunately, the Roland cavalry's equipment was all excellent. Not only were their armor made of metal but even their swords, daggers, and even wrist braces were completely made of metal. It was not easy to remove everything in a short time. Just removing their armor already took up plenty of time.

Muse was indeed worthy to be called the Roland Continent's top sorcerer, the Black Veiled Temple Saint. He quickly drew a magical hexagram pattern with the magic crystal. After that, he took out a silver bottle, unscrewed the lid and drank the magical holy water in it.

Muse knew that after he drank the holy water, he would be able to suppress the effects of the red dragon blood and would temporarily be able to use magic. However, the effect of the poison would be stronger in the future. He could not be bothered about the consequences then as he was in a life-threatening situation.

After that, he exerted himself and emitted a pale white light from his hands. The light seeped into the magic circle and the hexagram began to emit light. At that moment, the cavalrymen had just finished taking off all their armor and had rushed into the red fog. Before they could reach the front of the hexagram, there was a sudden burst of strong light, forcing the cavalrymen to close their eyes. The strong light shrouded the entire hexagram and suddenly disappeared with a muffled sound. Not only had the hexagram disappeared, Muse and the Duke of the Tulip Family had also disappeared without a trace.

Bia rushed in and looked at the magic circle. As a high ranking knight of the Roland Continent and leader of the group, he was more knowledgeable and immediately shouted, "No need to look at it anymore! This is spatial transfer magic! He has just been poisoned with the red dragon blood and still lacks magical power! This magic circle could not have taken him very far! Dispatch the

troops and search the area! We must find him! I want him dead or alive!” His subordinates started to shout and a few groups immediately spread out to search.

Tens of miles away, there was a silent forest. Suddenly, a bright light flashed by and a few warblers in the trees flew away out of fear. When the light disappeared, two people appeared in its place.

Muse was totally weak on the ground when he felt his body tremble. The pain from his injury woke him up. Turning his head, he saw a pair of blue eyes looking at him. Muse was startled and he screamed. He wanted to jump up but the pain in his shoulder prevented him from doing so.

Muse and Rody were lying down side by side, facing each other. “You’re awake?” Muse tried to sound calm but he could not.

Rody smiled wryly, “I woke up a long time ago but I could not open my eyes. However, I could hear all that was happening the past few days.” Muse was seized with terror as he heard Rody’s words. Rody slowly continued, “You do not need to be surprised. I became like this after my serious injuries. While I was not able to move, my mind was conscious.”

Muse gritted his teeth and asked, “Can you move right now?”

“No.” Rody sighed. His eyes showed that he felt anxious. “Right now, only my mouth can move and my eyes can see. However, the rest of my body still does not have energy. I cannot even lift a finger. I am afraid that both of us are in trouble.”

“You are ridiculing me!” Muse became angry.

“Hehe,” Rody laughed and did not speak further. After looking at Muse for a while he said, “I did not expect your subordinates to betray you. I guess you are not much of a leader.”

Muse reclined his head a little and shouted angrily, “So what? When I regain my magic, I will go back and kill them! Since you cannot move anyway, it seems that you are destined to be my

prisoner!”

“Not necessarily.” Rody laughed and calmly said, “I may as well let you know that my injuries were caused by using too much fighting energy when I fought against your cavalry. Because of that, I could not move for 10 days. However, I will recover quickly after 10 days. On the other hand, you drank red dragon blood and currently you are also seriously injured. You do not have magic right now. I don’t think it will be easy for you to completely recover from it. Hehe, which one of us will be the prisoner is yet to be seen.”

Muse wanted to refute but he was indeed in a difficult position. As a leader, it was a disgrace that his subordinates betrayed him. It was partly why he could not refute Rody’s words. He slowly sat up and saw that his shoulder was still bleeding. He could not use magic. Not knowing how to deal with the wound, he quickly covered the wound with his hand but winced the moment he touched it.

“If you touch the wound that way, it will get infected and you will die quickly,” Rody could not move but he advised Muse when he saw what he did. “Don’t tell me you do not know how to clean your wound with water and then bandage it?”

Muse froze for a moment. He was a noble in the Roland Continent and a large group of servants would always help him with everything. When he encountered any problems, he could solve it with his terrifying power. As a result, there were very few things in the world that he could not accomplish. In the past, he would just use a healing spell. That was why he did not know anything about dressing wounds or infections. Even if he had an understanding of it, he would not know how to actually do it.

Rody looked at him and sighed before he said, “Forget it. I will be able to move soon. Since you did not kill me and even remembered to take me with you when you escaped, I will help you to bandage it.” Rody said it out of goodwill but the moment Muse heard it, he

cried out in alarm, "No!" He immediately retreated far away.

"In that case, it is up to you," Rody said nonchalantly. "After all, your pain is none of my business. However, since we have escaped, they will definitely be searching for us. We can't be sure if we will recover in time before they find us. We might get caught and die together."

Muse snorted coldly and it triggered his wound. He took a deep breath. The pain from his shoulder was so intense that he felt dizzy. He grew up in the Temple ever since he was young. In the Roland Continent, he was the successor of the 'Saint' title which was also the most powerful position in the Temple. He was someone far above the masses with people constantly serving him. He had never experienced such a bitter feeling before. His cold and detached feelings had long disappeared. The pain was so severe that it brought tears to his eyes again.

They were silent for a moment. Rody, who had been lying on the ground took a deep breath and tried to sit up. Talking to himself, he sighed and said, "Damn, Old Mark was not lying. Not being able to move for 10 days is really boring."

Once his body could move, his strength gradually returned. The injuries on his body had already been cured by Muse's magic. The 10 days of paralysis was an after effect of using the powerful gem. Now that 10 days had passed, he had started to recover fast.

"So, do you want to bandage that wound? You will die if you continue to bleed that much." Rody looked at Muse and mocked him, "I don't believe that you are not afraid of death. Hehe, what kind of Saint are you? Are you immortal?"

Muse saw that Rody could already move. He vigilantly kept his distance and said, "No need!"

Rody slowly stood up and stretched his waist. Although he still felt weak he could already move. Giving Muse a glance, he suddenly laughed and said, "Looks like you are my prisoner. You

made me feel so miserable the other day but today, you have made a fool of yourself.”

Those words made Muse feel ashamed and resentful. His body trembled and his shoulder wound hurt even more. Before Muse could take a deep breath, he fainted.

Rody sighed, frowned and glanced at Muse who was on the ground. Then he murmured, “That’s enough I guess. Since you saved my life, I will also save yours. However, this person is very strange. I must definitely bring him back to Watt Fortress for questioning. The people of the Roland Continent actually came here to cause trouble. It looks like things in the Northwest are getting more complicated. He is also a high-ranking sorcerer. According to the information left behind by Dandong, it may be possible for him to get rid of these long ears...”

Rody was thinking to himself as he leaned over to look at Muse. He saw the black veil and felt curious. He was about to remove the veil when he suddenly stopped.

Forget it. There must be a reason why this person does not want to show his face

Rody originally had what was known as a Yin Yang face. He used to be ridiculed for his appearance. When he was younger, he also used to cover his face in fear of others seeing it. As a result, he hesitated and did not remove Muse’s veil. It was not because Rody was turning soft. He was just being empathetic of another person’s sore spot.

Muse was unconscious on the ground. One of his hands tightly held the wound on his shoulder. He was wearing gloves and they were covered in dirt. Rody moved his hand away and removed the gloves, revealing a small fair hand with slender fingers. Rody frowned. “This sorcerer is too weak. His hands are like that of a woman. No wonder he could not endure the pain.”

Although Rody felt suspicious, he continued. He tore off Muse’s

black robes and inner clothes which revealed very fair and delicate skin. He saw that the badly mangled wound on his shoulder was still oozing blood.

Rody took a deep breath. He felt that the gap between the clothes was still too small to allow him to bandage the injury. He tore away more clothing from the shoulder. However, when he was half way through, Rody stopped. He was shocked as he looked at the scene before him.

He was staring at a pair of breasts...

“Gosh, she's a woman!” Rody jumped back in shock as if he got cut by a knife.

Chapter 82: The Beautiful Prisoner

Rody just stared at Muse who was lying on the ground. He was at a loss and did not know what to do. It was something he found even more difficult than risking his life to fight Reuenthal.

He was stunned for a long while until he smelled the scent of blood. Rody then sighed and smiled, “What a disgrace. The person who thoroughly defeated me is a woman. If people ever find out, I will die of shame.”

Out of curiosity, Rody took a peek under Muse’s black veil and saw the pale face of a woman. When Rody saw her thin and pallid face, he could not move his eyes away.

He could hear his heart beating.

This is bad, this is bad. This is very bad. No wonder she covered her face. If she did not, all the women in the world would have been infuriated while all the men in the world would have been mesmerized...

Rody had met a lot of beautiful women. Nicole was like an expensive flower, Angel had a likable personality, Jojo was seductive while Myka was cool and elegant. Each of them had their own strengths and they were all extremely beautiful. He looked at the unconscious female sorcerer. She had knitted eyebrows and her nose was slightly wrinkled. Although her snow-white skin looked a bit pale due to the blood loss, it did seem like she was very fair. Her other facial features were also very exquisite. Her knitted eyebrows were full and nicely curved. Her eyelashes were beautiful too. She nibbled her lips in pain even though she was unconscious and it exposed her white teeth. If she had woken up and smiled at Rody, she would have definitely been more beautiful than all the other women.

After looking at her for a long time, Rody sighed and said, “I am not trying to take advantage of you. This is to save your life. I

cannot watch you bleed to death.”

It took a lot of willpower for him to hold on to his rationale. He gritted his teeth and held Muse gently in his arms. He then bandaged her shoulder with the pieces of clothing he had torn off. It was hard to avoid touching her soft skin as he bandaged her. Rody bit his teeth together and tried to think about the time he bandaged the broken leg of his neighbor's ewe when he was younger. It was not easy to have self-control when he was in front of this extremely beautiful woman.

Ignoring the sweet smelling and delicate figure in front of him, he hastily finished bandaging her shoulder and laid her back on the ground. Rody then gave a sigh of relief. He suddenly heard Muse groan softly. Rody hit himself on the head as he remembered that a seriously injured person would be thirsty after losing a lot of blood. However, there were no leather flasks or containers nearby. He looked at the ground around Muse and saw a lot of broken bottles. They were all kept on her body but fell out when Rody tore her clothes.

Rody picked up a few bottles and he opened one of them. Then, he took a sniff. He smelled something fragrant. Whatever the contents were, he drained them and then he went deeper into the forest to look for water.

Where there was a forest, there would surely be water. Sure enough, Rody brought back some water in the bottle just after a short time.

Muse was feeling dizzy. She felt cold one moment and warm the next. Her shoulder still burned with pain but her lips felt something moist. Bewildered, Muse struggled in her stupor to see the Duke of the Tulip Family frowning at her. He was holding a damp cloth and was applying water to her lips.

Muse had never faced hardships before this disaster. Her greatest skills were also disabled. She had lost the very thing she could rely

on the most and was betrayed by her own subordinates. Although she was able to quarrel with Rody earlier, she was in a state of panic. She saw the duke looking at her; sweating. Her heart felt warm and she struggled to sit up.

She moved her body and noticed that something was wrong. She looked down and saw her clothes scattered everywhere. Her shoulder was also wrapped with her inner clothes which Rody had torn off. The cloth she used to wrap around her breasts had also come off.

I was unconscious earlier. Does this mean that he has seen and touched my body?

The moment she thought of it, she screamed. She was so scared that her face turned blue. When she saw the duke's smiling face, she panicked and was enraged. She screamed again. Not knowing where she got her energy from, she rushed forward to slap him in the face.

The sound of the slap was loud. Rody was too close and he was not prepared. As a result, a palm print could be seen on his face. Muse still felt embarrassed and angry so, she tried to slap him again. However, this time Rody reached out and grabbed her wrist. Muse struggled but Rody's grip was like an iron pincer. She did not have any magic at that time and was equivalent to an ordinary person. How could an ordinary person fight a senior warrior in terms of strength?

This angered Rody and he cursed, "Damn you! If I knew you would do this, I would not have saved you! I should have let you bleed to death!" Letting go of Muse's hands, he stood up and stepped back a little.

Muse gritted her teeth and cried out, "You dare... you dare take advantage of me! I will definitely kill you!"

"Take advantage of you?" Rody sneered. "You think I want to look at you? Is a person who is neither male nor female nice to look

at?"

Muse's face turned red as she started to think of a reply. However, she never had any experience scolding anyone even as she grew up. In the Roland Continent, she was a noble. She usually just needed to speak in a serious tone or stare and others would be scared. She had never used or even heard any offensive language before.

Rody realized that Muse had nothing left to say. Feeling pleased with himself, he smiled. After that, he said, "I was your prisoner for 10 days but now you are my prisoner. I will ask you a few questions so, you better answer me honestly."

Muse sneered and did not speak. She raised her head and angrily stared at Rody.

Rody smiled and said, "That's right. You can be angry but do not be cold and indifferent like a stone. Hmm, you don't really look like a woman. In fact, you don't even look like a person."

Muse's expression changed. She narrowed her eyes as she looked at Rody and said, "Say what you want! You have disgraced me too much. Just kill me now. If not, I will personally kill you after I recover!"

Rody waved his hand and ignored what she said. "That is your choice! Now let me ask you, what are you people from the Roland Continent trying to do here? What kind of collaboration do you have with Reuenthal?"

Muse scoffed without looking at Rody. She closed her eyes and pretended not to hear anything. Rody froze for a moment before his face changed and said, "If you do not reply, I can leave on my own! If you stay here alone, you will also die!" Muse did not flinch. She still kept her eyes closed and remained silent.

Rody was silent for a moment but his face grew red and he loudly said, "Fine! You might not be afraid of death but there are still

other things you are afraid of! I can take off all of your clothes and see whether you are a man or a woman!”

Muse was startled. Her facial expression changed slightly. She opened her eyes and looked at Rody before saying, “That is also your choice! I am now your prisoner. Whatever you do, I will be unable to resist! Just remember, if I do not die, I will kill you one day!” After she had finished speaking, she closed her eyes again. Although she was terrified, she was also prepared for whatever that might be coming her way.

Rody was stunned and there was another moment of silence. He sighed and slowly said, “Forget it. We don’t even know if we can escape from this grassland! You took me as your prisoner for 10 days and I do not know how far away Watt Fortress is. Let us first get out of here alive before we discuss any further.”

After he was done, Rody turned around to walk towards the woods. After he took a few steps, he turned back and said, “I am going to find us something to eat so that we will have the energy to walk. We are still surrounded by the grasslands. I am afraid that your subordinates who betrayed you are still searching for you. If you wish to die, you may go ahead and escape first.”

Ignoring Muse who was gnashing her teeth, Rody walked away in large strides. He angrily scolded Andy in his mind, “Old fellow, you told me to take off her clothes?! Hah! Your methods were ineffective!”

Rody’s physical strength was gradually restored. After being in the forest for a short while, he caught a pheasant. He looked for a sharp stone to cut the pheasant open and then he washed it clean.

Fortunately, it was daytime so he was not afraid that the fire would be detected. Rody found a few branches and lit them up. He then stuck a long branch into the pheasant and roasted it.

Muse sat there refusing to look at Rody. However, she could smell the scent of the roasted pheasant from time to time. She was

exhausted from all the blood she had lost and she also had not eaten for most of the day. As a result, she could not help but feel hungry. Although she was flustered because of the smell, she still refused to show any weakness.

Rody ignored Muse and ate his meal. After that, he extinguished the fire and buried everything else in the ground.

Muse could not help but opened her eyes to look at Rody. She frowned and asked, “What are you doing?”

Rody looked back at her and gently said, “Covering up our traces. Your subordinates will surely be searching around. If they were to find this place and see this, they would know that we were here. They would definitely be able to follow us. Don’t you even know this?”

Muse’s face turned slightly red. Although she was powerful, she did not know about things like covering up traces. On top of that, with her extraordinary strength, she was usually the one chasing people down to kill them. How would she know about preventing people from chasing her?

Right after Rody packed everything up, he walked towards Muse. Ignoring her struggles and screams, he carried her on his back and walked out of the woods.

Although Muse was frightened and continued to struggle, Rody was much stronger than her.

He chose a direction and walked in big strides. Muse still wanted to shout but Rody stuffed her mouth with something without turning his head around.

The thing in her mouth was oily and fragrant. It was a pheasant drumstick. She then heard Rody speak in a serious and low voice, “Shut up. Those men are certainly still looking for us. If you shout, you will catch their attention!” Pausing for a moment, Rody continued, “Do you think I want to take advantage of you? I have

no interest in a person who is neither man nor woman.”

Muse’s mouth was full of the roasted pheasant. She listened to the Duke of the Tulip Family and decided to keep quiet. However, she could not tell if she was feeling angry or shameful.

Chapter 83: A Thousand Year Old Tale

Rody carried Muse across the grassland for two days. They usually traveled during the night where they less visible. That evening, they heard the sound of horses trotting. They both immediately hid among the grass. They saw a team of Roland cavalrymen, about 100 of them running in their direction from the distance.

Both of them held their breath until the cavalrymen went by.

Muse who had always relied on her own terrifying strength could not accept the situation they were in. She could not help but ask Rody, "Aren't you supposed to be very powerful? The other day you completely annihilated my 200 cavalrymen. Now there are only 100 of them. What are you afraid of?"

Rody gave her a strange look but did not say anything.

Last time, Old Mark's life-saving crystal gave me unlimited fighting energy. But right now, I do not have anything. Other than my strength as a Grade 4 swordsman, I do not even have a stick to use. Charging into 100 heavily armed cavalrymen is just suicide.

At night, they finally found a small grassland tribe. The tribe only had about a dozen tents. They also had a fence which surrounded about a dozen cattle. A few horses were also tied beside each tent. The place was extremely quiet without a single person keeping guard.

Rody left Muse behind and went in to steal a horse. Muse watched him while she hid. She contemplated her dignity. She never thought that she would be reduced to accompanying someone to steal a horse.

Her palms began to sweat. After a long while, she suddenly heard dogs barking. Soon after, she could hear the sound of drums as the tents began to light up. She then saw Rody rush out from the tribal

village with a horse. The horse rushed towards Muse and she noticed that Rody looked somewhat embarrassed. He had a string of dried meat hanging around his neck. Rody helped her up and made her sit in front of him.

The tribesmen behind them were shouting. Some of them had already mounted their horses and were chasing them. Rody and Muse fled as fast as they could. After some time, they could no longer hear the sound of people chasing them. Then they sighed in relief.

Muse started to blame him. "Aren't you very skilled? How did you get spotted for stealing a horse?"

Rody did not answer immediately. He took the dried meat around his neck and hung it on the saddle. After that, he took something out and gave it to Muse. He then replied without facing her, "At first there were no problems but when I saw this, I risked entering the tent. As a result, I was spotted."

Muse pinched the object and asked, "What is this?"

Rody smiled wryly. "The grassland tribe's medicine for wounds. At Watt Fortress, we captured a lot of people from the Great Moon Kingdom. They were all carrying this. That's why I recognized it." He crushed the medicine and mixed it with water. After that, he said, "Rub this on your wound." He then paused for a moment before continuing, "I heard that applying this medicine can be painful but the effects are good. When you use it, try to endure the pain."

Muse held the medicine and it felt warm. She knew that it was warm because of the duke's body temperature. At that moment, she felt hot and her mind went blank.

They rode the horse towards the south for three days. Fortunately, they did not run into any pursuing soldiers. The grasslands were very large but the population was small. This saved them a lot of trouble. As they continued to travel south,

Rody started to worry about the situation at Watt Fortress so he sped up. Muse was frustrated but she could not do anything other than follow Rody involuntarily.

She tried using many magical methods but it seemed like her sorcery had disappeared without a trace. She also did not have any magic tools around and had no way to make use of her magical knowledge.

She was originally a proud and indifferent person. However, that personality was built on her terrifying strength. Now, she had become a weak and ordinary woman. On top of that, she had a hard time understanding common social communication; She never needed to worry about that before. When she became a fugitive, she was initially stubborn and argued with Rody. However, she had to rely on Rody for everything. Along the way, the skillful warrior, Rody hid their tracks and stole food.

Not only was Muse unable help at all, she was ridiculously lacking in common sense. In the beginning, Rody just gave the food to Muse. However, he soon learned that without magic, she could not even start a fire. Occasionally when he caught a hare, he would give it to her. However, she did not know how to cut and clean the hare for cooking or remove the fur. Rody could only smile and do everything. He could not help but think of Muse as an idiot.

At first, Muse would answer back sarcastically but then she realized that she was really ignorant of simple things. She understood that without her magic and the duke's help, she would not have survived a day in the grasslands. Her arrogance started to disappear and she began to act more like a helpless woman. She also remained silent whenever the annoying duke called her an idiot.

As the Saint of the Roland Continent's Black Veil Temple, the people usually respected her. She was also said to be one of the most outstanding saints in the past several hundred years.

However, she was now regarded as an ignorant little girl by the Duke of the Tulip Family and was even called an idiot. She felt extremely frustrated because she was unable to refute his words.

That day, the two of them met a group of traders with their caravans. Rody observed the caravan carefully for a long time to determine that they did not have any soldiers from the Great Moon Kingdom. After some struggle, they went up to the caravan to ask for news. They wore the stolen clothes of a male and female herder. Rody also forced Muse to smear dirt on her face to hide the color of her complexion. They both rode a single horse towards the caravans to greet the traders.

Rody did not know how to speak the language of the Great Moon Kingdom but Muse was extremely proficient at it. They started chatting with the traders, pretending that they wished to buy some goods.

Although the tribes in the grasslands were self-sufficient, there were caravans that traded in goods from the Radiant Empire. They brought specialty goods from the Radiant Empire and traded it for fur to take back to the Radiant Empire. Reuenthal did not prohibit the entry of these caravans. After all, that was where he bought the metal to forge their swords.

Although the two nations were fighting, the Great Moon Kingdom was located at the grasslands. There were no fortresses or walls to separate the territories. Prohibiting trade would have been a joke.

The two pretended to buy goods and asked for information. They found out that the havoc caused by the two groups dispatched by the Radiant Empire had made Reuenthal withdraw his troops back to the Great Moon Kingdom. Although the Trier Fortress and Loulan Fortress were still occupied and guarded by soldiers of the Great Moon Kingdom, their king was furious about the havoc caused in their country. He blamed Reuenthal for his incompetence. After that, there was an uproar in Dragon Plateau.

The tribal leaders who disliked Reuenthal spoke against him and did not want Reuenthal to continue leading the soldiers. On the other hand, the second prince received a lot of support. He took the opportunity to seize power and the war had temporarily stopped.

As for the Radiant Empire, the Watt Fortress was still heavily guarded. The banner of the Tulip Family continued to fly but there was no other news.

Rody calmed down and believed that Gordon, Sieg, and the others were still waiting for him to return. He wished that he could grow wings and immediately fly back to Watt Fortress.

When they were resting that day, Muse looked gloomy. Rody laughed and asked, “Hey, what’s wrong idiot? What are you thinking about?”

During the past few days, while escaping together, they had become dependent on each other. Although they were enemies, they had now established an affinity for each other.

Muse no longer replied sarcastically. She ignored the fact that he called her an idiot. She lightly asked, “Your Excellency, have you decided on what to do with me after taking me back to Watt Fortress?”

Rody shook his head and replied, “I have not decided yet but I cannot let you go. The Roland Continent must have a reason for meddling in the war between Radiant Empire and the Great Moon Kingdom. How can I feel at ease without knowing their true motives?”

Muse closed her eyes and thought for a moment before sighing. She said softly, “There is nothing strange about it. What do you want to know? Just ask. I will tell you if I can.”

The moment she said that Rody was surprised, “You are willing to tell me now?”

Muse looked frustrated as she whispered, “His Majesty the King wants to get rid of me. Why should I pledge my loyalty to him? However, as a temple saint, there are still things that I cannot say.”

Rody nodded and thought for a moment before asking, “To tell you the truth, I am not familiar with the situation in the Roland Continent. If you all wanted to fight with the Radiant Empire, why did you all not attack directly from the north?”

Muse smiled but it slowly dulled. “Fight with you? Surely, we cannot win...”

Before Rody could speak Muse smiled again and continued, “We are different from all of you. This whole vast continent is the Radiant Empire’s territory. The populace and ample resources on this continent all belong to the Radiant Empire. Our Roland Continent is made up of more than a dozen kingdoms. Each has its own king and army. All of them are believers of the Temple and the king must be acknowledged by the Temple in order to ascend the throne. We are not of one mind and there is infighting every year. If we were to fight with you, we would definitely lose.”

“My kingdom is the largest one on the Roland Continent, [the Kingdom of Sauron](#). Although the Roland Continent has more than a dozen kingdoms, the Kingdom of Sauron occupies half of the continent with its territory, military force and population. The other 12 kingdoms combined cannot compete with the Kingdom of Sauron. However, at the same time, my kingdom is also the most helpless one. It is located in the south near the thunderous regions and next to the powerful Radiant Empire.

For hundreds of years, every time the Radiant Empire became stronger, you would cross the ocean to attack us. We would need to mobilize all the kingdoms of the Roland Continent to fight back! However, once the Empire retreated, the Roland Continent would be torn apart again and the 13 kingdoms would go back to doing their own things. The Radiant Empire has such a big territory and is so powerful. How can we in the Roland Continent pick a fight

with you? The only time we have ever won was when we fought across the sea or when we took advantage of your civil strife but in the end..." Here, Muse looked at Rody and whispered, "In the end, we were still defeated by your ancestors, the Tulip Family."

Rody's face turned red. He was an impostor and it felt weird when someone praised his 'ancestors'.

Muse did not pay attention to Rody's facial expression and continued, "The Kingdom of Sauron has always been known as the strongest on the Roland Continent and its cavalrymen are all brave but it is in extreme danger because it is the closest kingdom to the Radiant Empire. Sauron acts as a strong barrier blocking the further expansion of the Radiant Empire to the north while the other 12 kingdoms hide behind us and enjoy peace."

Rody raised his eyebrows and could not help but ask, "Since the Kingdom of Sauron is the strongest on the Roland Continent, why did you not capture the 12 smaller kingdoms and unify the continent?, Won't you be able to fight against the Radiant Empire then?"

Muse looked helpless and replied in a low voice, "You will not understand. The Roland Continent believes in the Temple. Everyone, whether it is the king, the nobles, the knights or the civilians, they are all believers of the Temple. First of all, the Temple would never agree to unifying the continent. If the bishop made a decree, everybody would oppose to a war. Even the King of Sauron would have to step down. Starting a war to unify the continent? It is impossible."

Rody sneered. "Hah, it looks like your Temple does not have good intentions! Uniting the continent to create a strong empire will weaken the Temple's authority! Of course, they wouldn't want that to happen! If I were the Temple's leader, I would try to stop anyone from uniting the Roland Continent too! It is much easier to have all the small countries duped into worshiping one supreme religious leader than to struggle under a single strong imperial

power...”

Muse shook her head. She obviously did not take the duke's nonsensical words to heart and slowly replied, "The Temple is the religious leader of the Roland Continent. Naturally, they have power. They have 200,000 Circle Knights scattered across the continent in all the kingdoms. The Temple will also assign a saint to each kingdom. The saint manages religious sites and helps the king to govern the kingdom. In the smaller kingdoms, the saint has even greater authority than the king... so... so, do not insult the existence of the Temple! The Temple is God's building! Everyone on the Roland Continent is under God's protection! It is not... not as despicable as you said!"

Hearing this, Rody sneered again. “No wonder you cannot defeat the Radiant Empire! There is no centralized rule and there is no unity.”

Muse gave a crooked smile and replied, “It seems like the current King of Sauron has the same idea as you. The moment he came into power, he has been finding ways to weaken the Temple’s authority and influence of the religion. This time, he formed a secret alliance with the Great Moon Kingdom and funded them to fight with the Radiant Empire. How else did you think Reuenthal managed to get so much provision and military equipment? I may not know about many things but I know that war requires money!”

“Hehe,” Rody said with a sneer. After that, he said, "What about you? Did they dispatch you as a special envoy to assist Reuenthal?"

Muse nodded. “Although King Sauron is not loyal to the Temple, weakening the Radiant Empire is beneficial to the Roland Continent. This was something the Temple understood. As we cannot have a frontal attack, we can only hope for an internal strife. When the Great Moon Kingdom and Radiant Empire are at war, the powerful Reuenthal can at least delay the Radiant Empire for a few years... or even longer. Then, there will be a time of peace for the Roland Continent. So... so the Temple decided to support

King Sauron even though they do not have a good relationship with him. This time, they dispatched me for the sake of helping Reuenthal to fight the Radiant Empire. It shows the amount of attention the Temple is giving to this.”

Rody thought for a moment and said, “I finally understand the gist of it but why do they want to betray you?”

Muse sneered and replied, “I am the Saint of the Black Veil Temple. Once my training is completed, I will officially serve as the leader of the Temple in the Kingdom of Sauron. King Sauron wants an autocratic rule. Naturally, he will not want a religious leader who can resist his power. It is normal for him to try and assassinate me. If I were to die here, they would be able to push the responsibility to the Radiant Empire. The Temple would not be able to say anything either. Besides, according to the Temple’s, a saint needs a few years of training. If I were to die, the Temple would need to send another saint to the Kingdom of Sauron and that would take a few more years.”

Rody sighed. “King Sauron schemed to kill you because it would take the Temple a few more years to send another saint. He would then weaken the influence of the Temple in the Sauron Kingdom and by the time the Temple sends a new saint, he would already be in power.”

After that, Rody suddenly thought of something. He asked, “The God you all believe in, and the God that the people of the Radiant Empire believe in, are they the same?”

The color on Muse’s face suddenly changed. Her beautiful face immediately turned cold and she replied, “Of course not! The Radiant Empire worships the devil! Only the Roland Continent worships the real Almighty God! The one you all worship is a demonic scum from the Mythical War during the Mythical Era a thousand years ago!”

Rody was curious, “What? How so? What Mythical War from a

Mythical Era a thousand years ago?”

Googling 索伦 (Suo Lan) yielded Sauron among the images.

Chapter 84: To Never Leave Each Other

No matter what Rody asked, Muse was no longer willing to answer. The Mythical War during the Mythical Era was something Rody had never heard of. He never knew this legend was a secret and only a few people from both continents had knowledge about it. It could not be disseminated to common folk either.

Muse had accidentally let it slip when she was agitated. She then regretted it.

Rody realized that Muse was no longer willing to talk so he stopped asking.

If you don't want to talk, I can always ask someone else. Skeleton Andy and Old Mark have lived for over 200 years. They should know something.

Muse looked calm for a moment before she started to speak, "I... I am now your prisoner and I do not expect you to let me go. I just hope that you can promise me something."

"What?"

Muse took a deep breath and coldly said, "I hope you can let me send news of what happened here back to the Temple. I want to let His Excellency the Bishop know about the king's attempt to overturn the Temple and assassinate the saint."

Rody gave a wry smile and said, "I will decide later. Let me ask you first, what kind of position does the saint have in the Temple? Why did you pretend to be a man? Are all the saints in the Temple women? Are they... all as powerful as you?"

Muse's face turned red and she gritted her teeth. "Of course not! The Saint of the Temple can be a man or a woman. Only those who truly believe in God can enter the Temple to train and become a saint! As for me... hehe... I never expected the legendary Duke of the Tulip Family to be weaker than me."

Rody waved his hand and laughed. “Why are you getting angry again? You are always so arrogant.” After that, his face sank as he asked, “That day when you fought me, you said something about ‘Holy Light’ energy and ‘Domain Force’. What are those?”

Muse frowned. “Your fighting energy has already turned gold which means that you have already reached the stage of ‘Holy Light’ energy. If you can further improve it, you will be able to comprehend ‘Domain Force’. Do you not know this? Although we are from different continents, a sorcerer and a magician both have the same ultimate goal which is to achieve ‘Domain Force’. It has been this way since a thousand years ago...” Muse suddenly stopped and took a deep breath before continuing, “They are all the same.”

Rody pretended not to hear her previous sentence and lightly asked. “Have you understood ‘Domain Force’?”

“Hmph!” Muse’s face turned red and she whispered, “If I had, you would have died that day! The moment you understand ‘Domain Force’ is when you are nearing the existence of God! Do you think it is so easy? I am only a senior practitioner.”

Rody was not too concerned about the situation of the two continents but he was very interested in their practices. He could not help but ask, “You said I was a low-level practitioner. What did you mean? I am a warrior. A warrior’s final goal is to reach the rank of a Sacred Warrior. I have never heard of practitioners.”

Muse sighed and replied, “That is the limit set by the Divines. Each rank has already been regulated. Your so-called Sacred Warrior is commonly known on the Roland Continent as a major practitioner. If you have reached the rank of a Sacred Warrior, you would not have lost to me that day. At least, we would be comparably matched. This is still far from ‘Domain Force’. However, it seems that you have not reached the rank of Sacred Sword either. Otherwise, you would have had enough power to strike back that day. When your training of ‘Holy Light’ energy

makes your fighting energy turn completely gold, you will reach the highest limit for a warrior. You would probably be at the level of Sacred Warrior according to the ranking of the Radiant Empire. In the Radiant Empire, there are 'warriors' but the Roland Continent is a continent of 'knights'. Our knights have our own way of cultivation! Even if you do not encounter me but encounter one of the high leveled Holy Knights, you will still be defeated! Our Holy Knights are probably as powerful as your Sacred Warriors!"

Muse continued to speak until the very end.

Rody was fascinated when he heard it all. He never had an interest in status and power. He already felt oppressed when he became a noble in the Imperial Capital. To him, it was not a happy thing. When he saw the behavior of the powerful nobles at Watt Fortress, he completely lost any little bit of interest he had left. His only hope was to pursue the pinnacle of swordsmanship.

Muse felt depressed. She closed her eyes and ignored Rody. Her long black hair blew in the evening breeze. Rody looked at her and thought to himself.

She is almost the same age as me. If she can train herself to become so powerful, I can do the same too!

In the middle of the night, Muse was sleeping when she suddenly felt someone cover her mouth. She woke up and saw a dark shadow beside her. The shadow gave off a familiar odor and she knew it was Rody. She felt ashamed and angry as she thought that he had a licentious intent. She quickly bit the hand covering her mouth and at the same time, she covered her chest with her hands. She made up her mind to resist until the end if he tried to violate her.

Rody's hand was in pain but he resisted the urge to cry out. He leaned forward and whispered to Muse, "Don't move. Someone is coming here. From their footsteps, I do not think they are herders!"

As his words gently rang in her ears, she felt his breath on her ear and her cheek. Her face turned red and her heart pounded for a while before she calmed down. She then heard some rustling sounds and saw a few shadows surrounding them. Based on the sound of their light footsteps, it was probable that they had malicious intentions.

Muse panicked. In the past, she would have just used her sorcery but right then she was an ordinary powerless woman. Without anything to rely on, she felt afraid. Without realizing, she leaned on Rody. She saw his firm expression and a thought she never expected to have flashed through her mind.

He is here. He can protect me!

There seemed to be six people surrounding them. Rody listened to their footsteps and his heart sank. He could tell all six of them were skillful warriors. It was possible that they were all high ranking knights from Roland.

Rody waited patiently and stayed still so that they would think that he was still asleep. However, his muscles tensed up as he continued to wait.

When one of them approached from the left, Rody suddenly jumped. He was already prepared. In the darkness, he leaped up like a leopard. The person he crashed into was wearing heavy armor, but he managed to dodge in time. Rody used his scimitar and slashed the man's throat. When the other four people saw what happened, they stopped treading softly. They shouted and rushed forward.

In the dim light of the night, a few Roland knights in silver armor could be seen wielding cross-shaped swords. They surrounded Rody.

After Rody killed one of them with a surprise attack, he looked at the other five knights and asked, "Are you the knights of the Sauron Kingdom?"

One of them who seemed like the leader of the group did not expect Rody to ask that question. He loudly replied, "I am a Royal Knight of the Third Regiment..." Without waiting for him to finish speaking, Rody rushed towards him.

His sudden movement was unexpected. Rody and Muse had spent so many days together so he had already learned some things about the Roland knights. From their conversations together, if an opponent spoke in a respectful tone before a fight, the Roland Knights had to reply respectfully as well. It was how they showed respect to their opponents.

The knights were not weak. They were the Royal Knights of the Third Regiment. They felt ashamed for having to attack their opponents at night. However, they had no choice if they wanted to complete their task. When Rody spoke to them, they immediately answered politely and believed that they could fight honorably after that. They did not expect Rody to take advantage of that opportunity to attack.

Rody had suddenly rushed in front of the knight and the knight was not skillful enough. He drew his cross-shaped sword at his waist to counter the attack and stepped back at the same time. But his sword did hit anything. It simply hit an empty space. He then thought to himself.

Not good!

Rody rushed forward and immediately rolled on the ground. His opponent's sword flew right above his head. Without hesitating, he slashed his opponent from the ground.

There was an agonizing scream as one of the knight's legs was severed. Rody took advantage of the situation and slashed again but was hastily blocked by the knight with his sword. Just as Rody slowed down, the remaining four knights charged forward.

Muse was on the ground clenching her fists so hard that her fingernails almost dug into her palms. After losing her magic, her

physical abilities were that of a normal person. In the dark, she could only see a few people fighting but she could not tell who was who.

She could only hear the sounds of swords clashing endlessly, followed by an occasional scream. Although a knight had fallen, the screams did not stop. She also heard a faint groan coming from the duke.

Suddenly, she heard Rody's voice in the dark. "Idiot, run quickly and get to the horse!" His voice quavered so he was possibly injured. One of the knights overheard him and immediately ran towards Muse.

Rody felt anxious. He abandoned his immediate opponent to chase after the knight who was attacking Muse. In the darkness, the knight's agonizing scream could be heard as he fell. However, Rody also groaned in pain as his opponent managed to slash him as well. If he had not moved away quicker, he would have been killed.

"Run! Do you want to die!?" Seeing that Muse had not moved, Rody shouted loudly again. Rody then turned around to block another attack from a knight behind him.

Muse's heart was racing and her eyes were tearing up. She looked at Rody resolutely for a moment before she got up from the ground and quickly ran to the horse a few meters away. Two of the knights saw her silhouette and they yelled for her to stop. They were however intercepted by Rody. They continued to shout. By then, Rody had sustained even more wounds.

Muse quickly mounted the horse. She mercilessly kicked the horse and it ran off in pain. The fighting and screaming continued behind her. Muse trembled. With each clash of the sword and each pain, she felt like her heart was being hammered. She suddenly used all of her strength to rein in the horse. The horse neighed as Muse swung its head around and urged the horse to go back.

Rody had three slash wounds on his body and they were not light

injuries. His three remaining opponents were skilled. They had the strength of Grade 3 swordsmen according to the Radiant Empire's ranking. Rody became more depressed as time passed. He did not expect a small group of Chivalric Knights to be so powerful. He was not aware, that the Sauron king had in fact specially selected his most skillful knights to go to the Radiant Empire because the task at hand was very important.

Both sides continued to clash. The knight in the middle was slashed by Rody and he moved back several steps. Blood flowed from his mouth and his body felt weak. He had to use his sword to support himself from falling. Rody was also vulnerable and his right arm was already badly injured by his opponent. He had to use his left hand to hold his scimitar. All four of them were covered in blood but they could no longer differentiate whose blood it was. They breathed heavily and looked at each other for any signs of weakness. Suddenly, the knight from the left shouted and rushed forward while holding his sword with both hands. The knight on the right also rushed forward and tried to slash Rody's waist.

Rody was using a stolen scimitar which was not very good. When his right arm was injured earlier, he was forced to use his left hand to fight. Hence, there was a big difference in his arm strength. After blocking the next few attacks, he started to gradually lose control.

Rody then heard the horse returning and gradually approaching him. He suddenly shouted And brandished his sword to push back the two knights. He then stepped back. As soon as the horse arrived right in front of him, he looked at Muse and seized the saddle. He skillfully jumped onto the horse and sat right behind Muse. Taking aim at a knight, Rody tried to spear him with his sword. As the knight tried to block it, Rody used his free hand to turn the horse around and prompted it to gallop away.

A few of the knights wanted to give chase and they ran to their own horses. However, they had earlier left their horses more than

10 meters away because they did not want to alert their enemies when they attacked. When they finally reached their horses, Rody had already disappeared.

Muse felt Rody's breathing becoming weaker. She could smell the pungent blood coming from Rody's bloodstained clothes. Suddenly, Rody's body turned limp. He lost hold of the reins and fell slowly from Muse's shoulder. If Muse had not held onto Rody in a timely manner, Rody would have fallen from the horse.

Muse's sweat and tears blurred her vision. She held Rody with one hand and controlled the reins in the other. "Why did you stop them?! They were trying to catch me! You... You could have escaped!"

Rody replied weakly, "I had to abandon my companions once... I swore that I wouldn't let the same thing happen again..."

As the horse sped up, Muse's tears fell into the dust...

"Do not stop! Go south, you... idiotic... woman..." Rody's weak voice entered her ears and then there was silence.

Chapter 85: Wolves Attack

The horse gradually slowed down in the middle of the night. Muse's entire body was sore and it felt like the duke was getting heavier with each passing moment. Although she called out to him, she did not get a reply.

They had been running for a very long time and she finally realized that they were not being chased anymore. Muse then got off the horse and carefully lowered Rody from the horse. She could not properly carry Rody down because her body was really sore and she was not physically strong. Muse had qualms about igniting a light so, she examined his injury carefully under the moonlight.

The bottom half of Rody's body was not seriously injured but his upper half was covered in blood. She gritted her teeth and tore his shirt. She was shocked and terrified when she saw his injuries.

Rody's shoulder was badly injured and his bone was exposed. If Rody had not dodged as quickly as he did, his whole arm would have been severed. When she turned him around, she saw an astonishingly long cut on his back. The cut was about 6 inches long. The wound looked extremely serious but fortunately, it was not too deep and it did not reach his bones.

She checked his breathing and noticed that it was becoming weaker. Muse panicked as she had relied on Rody for everything for so many days. They had just escaped but Rody was severely injured and unconscious. The vast grassland was pitch-dark and not a single shadow could be seen. From a distance, she could also hear the howling of a wolf. The sound frightened Muse.

Taking a few deep breaths, Muse took out the medicine Rody stole the other day and the water flask. She then removed Rody's clothes and carefully washed his wounds. After that, she applied the medicine. Although she was gentle, it was still very painful for Rody. Despite being unconscious, Rody was groaning in pain. His

forehead was covered in cold sweat and his eyes were tightly shut.

Muse's hands trembled and she shed tears. She had never panicked this much before. With great difficulty, she applied the medicine all over Rody's body. After some thought, she also tore parts of her clothing to bandage Rody. The dressing was rushed and messy because she had never done it before. However, she managed to eventually bandage Rody's entire body.

After that, she gently wiped away Rody's cold sweat as she looked at his pale, handsome face. Muse then felt something she never felt before. She could feel herself getting mad when she thought of the time Rody risked his life to protect her and shouted for her to quickly escape in the dark.

Suddenly, she heard the sound of rustling grass. Muse was startled and she nervously looked around. What she saw made her break out in cold sweat. Under the moonlight, she could see several short figures on a slope in the distance. The figures were looking directly at them.

The figures were wolves. Two wolves howled as they slowly approached Rody and Muse.

Muse was so frightened that she immediately screamed. The wolves were startled by her scream and moved a few steps back. They lowered their heads and howled again.

After that, the panicked Muse quickly carried Rody onto the horse and got on herself.

The horse, which was raised by herders was also frightened by the howling and it quickly ran.

Muse sat on the horse holding Rody with one hand. She turned her head around and saw the wolves chasing them. The wolves in the grasslands were extremely bloodthirsty. Although they saw their prey escaping, they could smell Rody's blood and refused to give up.

The horse, which Muse and Rody rode had been running for almost half the night. In addition, there were two of them on it so, the horse gradually slowed down. After a few hundred steps, Muse noticed that the wolves were slowly getting closer. She kicked the horse but it could not run any faster.

She saw a forest in front of her and immediately rushed in. Without waiting for the horse to stop, she slid down the horse together with Rody. Shortly after, she saw a short tree. She held onto a low branch with one hand and tried to pull Rody up with the other.

Unfortunately, she did not have enough strength. Normally, it would not be a problem for her if she was alone. However, this time she had to carry another person with her so, she could not climb up the tree.

The wolves did not immediately attack but they surrounded Rody, Muse and the horse in a circle. Muse was extremely afraid. She would be able to escape if she abandoned Rody and climbed up the tree on her own. In spite of that, her heart refused to let her abandon Rody. Muse turned pale. She took a dagger out of her boots and continued to scream. She continued to wave her dagger to scare off the wolves.

She noticed that the wolves were beginning to become impatient. The wolves slowly approached them. Muse slowly dragged Rody and backed up a little as she held the dagger tightly. Suddenly, she remembered that she still had a 'Fireball' magic crystal. She quickly took out the small crystal and threw it on the ground. The crystal broke and flames rose from the ground. The wolves were frightened and immediately took a few steps back. However, they still refused to leave and continued to look at Rody and Muse.

Muse knew that the flame would not last very long. She dragged Rody to the side of the tree trunk and carried Rody up. In desperate situations, people just have more strength than they normally would for some reason. Although Muse was weak, she

was desperate and somehow managed to push Rody onto one of the branches. After that, she climbed up the tree herself and pulled Rody a bit higher up.

Soon, the flames got smaller and the wolves started to gather around them again. When the flames were finally extinguished, the wolves swarmed and attacked the horse. The horse neighed pitifully until its throat was finally bitten. Muse trembled from fear and could only hear the howling of the wolves and the neighing of the horse. The air that night chilled her to the bone.

After they tore apart the horse, the wolves still refused to leave. They looked at Muse up on the tree and continued to howl. The more aggressive wolves constantly threw themselves at the tree trunk but fortunately, the tree trunk was very sturdy. It only shook each time upon impact.

Muse was so frightened that she started crying. She had never felt so terrified before. She held onto Rody tightly as her tears continued to flow. The dagger she held earlier had already dropped to the ground.

The wolves could smell Rody's blood and they did not leave even though they had already eaten the horse. Instead, the number of wolves increased and they walked around the tree in circles.

Muse was tense as she stared at the wolves. The two of them waited on the tree until the sky turned bright. The wolves walked around impatiently. Some even tried to jump up onto the tree branch but they could not reach.

Suddenly, there was a sharp sound cutting through the wind. A sharp arrow shot out from the woods and pierced the neck of a wolf. The powerful force of the arrow nailed the wolf to the ground. After that, arrows continued to fly out. The archer was extremely accurate. The arrows continued to hit the wolves and about four or five wolves cried out before dying. The remaining wolves finally became timid. They whimpered before running

away.

Muse was surprised and after a while, a brawny man on a horse appeared. The man wore a thick fur jacket and leather cap. He also held a long bow in his hands. The man dismounted and looked down. He then picked up two of the wolves and put them on his horse. After that, he looked up at Muse on the tree and shouted, "The wolves have already run away. You two can come down now!" The voice resounded loudly in the language of the grasslands.

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Muse did not reply because she was still frightened. The man thought that Muse could not understand. He paused for a moment and repeated himself in the common language of the Radiant Empire. Then, he saw the unconscious Rody next to Muse and frowned. "Is your companion injured?" Next, he walked up to the trunk and extended both of his hands, signaling for Muse to let Rody down first.

Finally, Muse was relieved and she slowly lowered Rody from the tree before climbing down herself. The brawny man lowered Rody gently to the ground and looked at Muse. He saw her beautiful face and was stunned for a moment. He then asked, "Who are you? How did you end up here at night?"

Muse stammered and was unable to find a reply. The brawny man waved his hand and said, "It is fine if you do not want to tell but recently, this place has been infested with wolves. Many people have already moved away from this place. Fortunately, I came out here to get a few wolf skins for money. Otherwise, the two of you would not have survived."

Muse frowned and asked in the language of the Radiant Empire, "Won't the wolves leave if we hide on the tree long enough?"

The man smiled and replied, "Looks like you are from the Radiant Empire." Muse blushed. Pretending not to notice, he

continued, “The wolves of the grasslands are cunning and greedy. They will not give up once they see a prey in front of them. Even if you hide on the tree for a few days, they will not leave. Most will also pretend to leave and actually hide as they wait for you to come down the tree.”

Muse thought for a moment and sighed before saying, “Thank you very much for your help.” She then looked at Rody and hesitated to ask for help again.

The brawny man saw her expression and could already guess what she was thinking. He then smiled and said, “Your friend's injury is not light. My tent is not far from here. Maybe you are better off following me back. I also have my own herbal medicine.”

The brawny man then looked at the horse's remains on the ground and laughed. “But you do not seem to have a horse anymore. My horse cannot carry three people.” After that, he went up to his horse and threw the wolf carcasses back onto the ground. They were his prey after an entire night's hunt but he threw them away without hesitating in a real heroic manner.

He then let Muse and Rody get on the horse while he walked on foot. The three of them left together.

Chapter 86: Special Envoy of the Imperial Capital

On the way to the tent, Muse found out that the brawny man was called Dark. He was from the Radiant Empire but he had migrated to the Great Moon Kingdom. He lived alone on the grasslands and hunted wolves for a living.

Although Dark's tent was supposedly 'not far away', it took almost half a day before they reached it. Dark's home was not big. It only consisted of two tents which were placed closely together and there were two horses behind the tents. There were also a few cattle and sheep, all important commodities of the grassland.

Once they entered the tent, Rody was placed on a felt mat. After that, Dark carefully examined Rody's injury. When Dark saw the frightening wound, he looked at it strangely but did not say anything. He took his herbal medication and applied it on Rody's injury before re-bandaging him. He was much more skilled compared to Muse and the bandage was more secure.

Muse who had been on the run the entire night was very hungry and thirsty. She calmed down after she ate some meat given by Dark. After some thought, she took out a few magic crystals and gave it to Dark before saying, "Thank you for saving us. Just now you had to throw away your preys. These crystals are still worth some money. Please accept them."

Dark looked at the objects in her hands and accepted them without any reservation. Then, he said, "These are magic crystals. Are you a sorcerer?" Muse was startled and left speechless as she stared at Dark. She did not expect a hunter of the grasslands to be such a knowledgeable person. Dark then shook his head and said, "You do not have to be nervous. I have no interest in your business. If you are giving these to me, I will take them. If you do not wish to talk about anything else, I will not ask you."

Muse questioned him, “Mister Dark, you are definitely not an ordinary person. Are you a warrior?”

Dark raised his eyebrows and laughed. “What? I didn’t ask you questions but now you are the one asking me questions? But, it is fine. I was a warrior in the Radiant Empire but now I am just a hunter of the grasslands.” After that, he walked to the front of the tent before he turned around and said, “Your companion is badly injured. The two of you better stay here for the next two days. Do not let him move around too much. Nonetheless, his physical health is very good. He will probably wake up soon.” After he finished speaking, he left the tent.

Muse felt helpless and could only sigh as she sat quietly beside Rody. Even if Muse and Rody had escaped danger, it had been so many days and Watt Fortress would probably be in chaos.

Twenty days ago, Reuenthal's army had retreated. The duke's and Giesslunt's raids in the grasslands of the Great Moon Kingdom were extremely effective. Giesslunt's soldiers had also safely returned many days ago. Although there were a few casualties when they encountered the defenders of the Great Moon Kingdom along the way, there were not many problems apart from that.

On the other hand, the duke’s troops returned gradually, one after another. One day there would be 300 people and another day, there would be 500 people. After asking those who returned, Seig found out that the duke had ordered the splitting and the withdrawal of soldiers. The duke only took 100 of his bodyguards with him.

As the days passed, most of the Wolves Fang cavalrymen had safely returned. Although there were some who perished during encounters with the enemy on the way back, approximately 8,000 or 9,000 soldiers out of the 10,000 had safely returned. However, there was no information on the most important one of all, the duke.

The city still carried the banner of the Tulip Family but His Excellency the Duke had not appeared for many days. The soldiers started to spread rumors. Sieg and Reuben tried to suppress them. As time passed by, however, their morale became more unstable.

Reuben had ordered the caning of a few officers who spread the rumors. That managed to temporarily suppress any confusion from spreading.

One morning a few days later, something major happened

A dozen cavalrymen from the Great Moon Kingdom arrived along with a cart. One of the officers of the Great Moon Kingdom then shouted and said that their messenger wanted to meet with General Reuben.

Sieg who sensed some trouble, quickly dispatched a few of his trusted subordinates to get Reuben and Gordon to meet at the garrison so that they could receive the messenger together.

The three of them were shocked when the Great Moon Kingdom showed them the contents of their cart. It was filled with the armor and weapons of the duke and his 100 bodyguards. The messenger claimed that the duke had already been killed by them. He demanded that Reuben should surrender immediately and hand over the Watt Fortress. Otherwise, they would resume the war five days later.

Reuben was extremely surprised and he could not believe that the duke had died. However, he could see that they were returning the duke's armor and weapons. He could not sit still. Reuben was short tempered. He would have immediately deployed his entire army to find and confront Reuenthal.

Fortunately, Sieg was experienced and prudent. He ordered his soldiers to make sure the Great Moon Kingdom's messenger and soldiers were escorted directly out of the fortress gate. He also ordered his soldiers to prevent the messenger from stopping or talking to anyone along the way. He then pulled Reuben aside and

convinced him that His Excellency the Duke was most likely not dead but ambushed on the way back. If the duke was dead, they would not send his armor and weapons but his head. Although the Great Moon Kingdom was intimidating, they were afraid of being found out.

Even though Sieg said those things, he was actually anxious. He looked at the armor of his personally selected elite bodyguards in front of him. It meant that most of them were dead. The only uncertainty was the safety of the duke. He was silent but his heart was pounding.

Sieg, Reuben, and Gordon were originally subordinates of the late Duke of the Tulip Family. They were comrades in arms for years and naturally could relate to one another truthfully. They ordered their soldiers to keep the returned armor and weapons. They also gathered the soldiers of the Great Moon Kingdom and locked them up to prevent chaos. However, their morale was still unstable. A lot of commanders and officers came to look for Reuben but they were all stopped by Sieg's subordinates.

Gordon had developed a cautious character after serving for many years in the palace. He proposed that he quietly lead a small group of soldiers to secretly enter the grasslands and search for the duke.

Sieg did not agree to his proposal. He believed that after the last attack, the Great Moon Kingdom would be more alert and cautious. Not just the grasslands, even the Loulan Fortress and Trier Fortress would be impossible to sneak past. If the group was not careful they would instantly be routed by the enemy.

They were scratching their heads to think of a plan when suddenly, one of the guards opened the door and ran in. He loudly reported, "Your Excellency, a special envoy dispatched by His Majesty the Emperor has arrived from the Imperial Capital! Request for Your Excellency to quickly go out!"

The three of them were shocked and quickly hurried out of the hall. They then saw a group of people wearing golden armor already rushing into the garrison house. The golden armor was that of the Imperial Family's Imperial Guards. Gordon quickly walked forward and scolded the messenger, "This is not how things should be done! When did the special envoy enter the city? Why am I only getting the report after they've reached the entrance?"

The bodyguard knelt down and loudly said, "Your Excellency, the special envoy has His Majesty's command token! The city gate officers did not dare to stop them! They are the Imperial Guards. Even Sieg's subordinates did not dare to block them!"

Before Gordon could say anything, he suddenly heard a charming voice. "Commander Gordon, I have not seen you for just a few days and you have already become very bad-tempered. I am already here. What other notification do you need?"

The three of them turned towards the entrance as soon as they heard her. They saw a graceful young woman followed by the Imperial Guards. The woman smiled as she glanced about with her smiling eyes.

Gordon's face changed when he saw who it was. It was the sister of Her Highness the Empress, Miss Jojo! As an official in the palace, he naturally knew who Jojo was. He also faintly knew that His Majesty, the duke, and Jojo were somehow connected to one another. He never expected the special envoy to be her.

Jojo's eyes looked around before her gaze met Gordon. She gave a shallow smile and ignored his surprised reaction. She asked, "Where is Seth?"

Gordon could barely smile and escorted Jojo into the hall. He stammered and introduced her to the rest. Reuben had left the Imperial Capital for many years so he did not know Jojo. On the other hand, Sieg was just a commander. Although he had heard of

Jojo, he had never seen her. Both of them realized that the woman was the sister of Her Highness the Empress and immediately saluted her.

Jojo's expression did not change. She patiently waited for Gordon to finish the introductions and then she asked again, "Where is Seth? Where is he?"

Gordon's face turned gloomy and he replied, "His Excellency... His Excellency the Duke is not here at the moment."

"Not here? Then, where is he?"

Reuben coughed. He knew he had no choice but to speak. With difficulty, he laughed and said, "His Excellency the Duke... he led the troops out to inspect the defenses..."

Jojo frowned. She looked at the three of them for a moment and suddenly, her eyes opened wide. She slammed the table and shouted, "Nonsense!"

Gordon was shocked. He knew how powerful she was. She was the sister of the empress and was admired by His Majesty the Emperor. Although the Imperial Capital had a lot of powerful families, none of them dared to provoke her.

Jojo's face sank and she coldly said, "Do all of you think I am that easy to bluff? Look at the way you speak! You all are mumbling and hesitating. It must definitely be lies! Why do you not tell me the truth? Where is Seth? Hmph, let me tell you that I have brought His Majesty's orders! I have important things to say to the duke! You dare stop me?"

Sieg sighed and ordered his soldiers to bring in the armor and weapons returned by the Great Moon Kingdom. Jojo looked at him strangely. She did not understand the meaning of Sieg's actions.

Sieg told his bodyguards to go out and close the door after them. He then sighed and went to Jojo's side to explain softly. As soon as he finished his explanation, Jojo's face turned pale and she

shouted, “What?”

Chapter 87: Oath To Kill!

Jojo was disturbed after she heard the alarming news. At that moment, there was nothing she could do. She jumped and pointed at the three officers before cursing, “Seth is missing! Your Lord Commander is missing and you military officers are sitting here safely! Do you not know how to dispatch soldiers for a search?”

Sieg forced a smile and tried to explain but Jojo refused to listen. She looked pale and quivered in anger. She thought of all the difficulties she went through to get His Majesty to dispatch her there. She wanted to see her lover instead she got this news. She then saw Rody’s armor which was returned by the enemy. The more she thought about it, the more frightened she became. She almost fell.

Gordon gritted his teeth and said, “We are still discussing. I wanted to take some people and secretly sneak into the grasslands to find...” Before he could finish, Jojo immediately shouted. “Good! Why are you still here then?”

Sieg was determined to object but if that was the order of His Majesty’s special envoy, he could not do anything.

Receiving the orders, Gordon immediately led a few soldiers out of the city. After that, Reuben took Jojo to the back to rest. Upon Jojo's insistence, they let her stay in the duke’s room.

With the door closed, Jojo secretly cried in the room the entire day. She was restless and afraid that someone would come to deliver bad news.

She sat on the bed and looked at Seth’s clothes. She became more paranoid as her thoughts continued to linger. Suddenly, she heard a knock on the door and a pretty girl holding a tub of water entered.

The girl gently handed a wet towel to Jojo. She saw that Jojo was

in low spirits. She softly said, “Don’t cry, I’m sure nothing will happen to His Excellency.”

Jojo froze for a moment. Her tears stopped flowing and she stared at the girl. After that, she asked in a low voice, “Who are you?”

The girl bowed and replied, “I was sent here to serve you, Miss.”

Jojo nodded and asked, “What is your name? How do you know that nothing will happen to the duke?”

The girl lowered her head and slowly said, “My name is Jadelina. I have met His Excellency the Duke...I... I just think that someone like him will not die so easily.”

The girl was the village head's daughter. She was from the village that Rody passed through before arriving at Watt Fortress. She had followed Rody and came to the city. Since there were battles in the surrounding area, it was not safe for a young girl like her to go back to the village on her own. Rody thought even though she was young she was extremely brave. She risked her life and pleaded for mercy for her villagers. He decided to leave her at the garrison and planned to only send her home after the war.

When Jojo arrived, Sieg tried to be cautious. There were no other women in the garrison. He and Reuben were both old men and the people by his side were bodyguards. How could any of those men take care of Miss Jojo? That was why Jadelina was asked to look after Jojo.

Jojo was sad and touched to find someone comforting her. She took her time to chat with Jadelina.

At night, several soldiers at the gates of Watt Fortress were vigilantly on the lookout. During the day, they had seen the messenger of the Great Moon Kingdom enter the city. They were uncertain if the war would continue or not. Suddenly, they saw two horses gradually approaching from a distance.

The first horse was ridden by a brawny man carrying a long bow. Behind the brawny man was another horse ridden by what looked like a woman. One of her hands held the reins of the horse while the other hand held a man's body. The three of them wore the Great Moon Kingdom's fur jackets and they came towards the walls of the city.

The three people were Rody, Muse and the strange grassland hunter, Dark.

When Rody regained consciousness, he insisted on continuing the journey regardless of his injuries and Muse's tearful dissuasion. He knew that he had clearly wasted too many days in the grasslands and without his presence at Watt Fortress, the morale of the soldiers would become unstable. He was at that time, the Duke of the Tulip Family after all and the Tulip Family represented the banner of the Imperial Army. They were at war and although he heard that Reuenthal had retreated, the source of information could not be fully trusted. He actually needed more than 10 days to recover from his injuries however, he could not afford to wait another 10 days. If anything unfortunate were to happen to Watt Fortress, it would be too late for regrets.

Dark knew that the two of them were about to leave. He saw that the young man was insistent on going to Watt Fortress despite his injuries. Although he did not say anything, he looked at the young man strangely. Muse was anxious and angry as Rody struggled to leave. Dark offered to accompany them to the fortress.

Muse was a sensitive woman and she found the grassland hunter a little bit strange. She had never seen many archers as skillful as him even in the Roland Continent.

Rody was still seriously injured and unable to ride a horse. He could get on the same horse as Muse but she had to hold him with one hand. The journey was bumpy but fortunately, the herbal medication was very effective. Rody's body was naturally robust. Although he sweated a lot due to the pain, he still managed to

withstand it.

Muse was extremely exhausted. It was quite unbearable for her to continuously ride a horse and hold a person at the same time. Initially, Dark wanted to offer to hold Rody but then he saw the way Muse looked at Rody. He chuckled to himself and did not say anything.

With Dark leading the way, they managed to travel smoothly and after two days, they finally left the grasslands. Along the way, they avoided the Loulan Fortress which was occupied by the Great Moon Kingdom. Dark seemed extremely familiar with the terrain of the Northwest. He knew where all the paths, roads and villages were. Muse thought that it was odd but she did not question him. Rody was surprised and suspicious.

Another thing that disturbed Rody was since he got injured, he could no longer talk with Andy. He had lost contact with the sarcastic skeleton. The old and strange monster had always given him ideas. Rody felt like he had lost someone he could rely on.

The soldiers above the walls demanded to know who they were as they aimed their bows. Dark smiled and looked at Rody. Rody then sighed and forced himself to shout, "Open the door! I have returned!"

While the soldiers were still puzzled, an officer arrived and saw Rody below the walls. He was shocked and immediately gave the order to open the city gates. The officer was part of the Central Cavalry so he recognized his commander.

The gates were opened and a group of soldiers rushed out. They saw how weak Rody looked and immediately helped him down. After that, they placed him on a soft bed. Rody had finally calmed down as he lied down on the bed. He then smiled at Muse and said softly, "Your Excellency the Black Veil Saint, please enter the city." After he finished speaking, he winked at her. Muse then dismounted from the horse and gazed at the wall. She was at a loss.

Although the both of them had been depending on each other for survival, her identity suddenly crossed her mind.

If I go in, would I become a prisoner?

Muse thought of getting on the horse and running away immediately but she could not move when she saw Rody on the bed.

Rody saw her in a daze. He laughed and loudly said, “ Hey idiot, what are you thinking about?”

His words made Muse feel warm. Her worries immediately disappeared. She laughed and entered the city. Rody then looked at Dark and said, “Mister Dark., please enter. I still have a lot of things I want to ask you.”

Dark gave a crooked smile. His eyes gleamed as he pretended like he accidentally saw the Tulip Family’s banner. As Dark followed him into the city, an officer suddenly ran down from the wall. The officer looked at Rody, who was lying down on the bed and immediately knelt down, “Your subordinate greets Your Excellency the Duke!”

Those words resounded like thunder to Dark and his heart pounded. He suddenly stopped and his expression changed as he looked at Rody.

Rody was aware of his stare and he frowned. “Mister Dark, what’s wrong?”

Dark could not help it but he stepped back. He looked straight at Rody. His voice was hoarse. “You are the Duke of the Tulip Family?”

Rody gave a wry smile and replied, “Yes, I am. A few days ago, I was still in enemy territory so I dared not mention it.”

Dark’s expression changed again. He took a deep breath and asked again, “You really are the Duke of the Tulip Family? The Radiant Empire’s Duke of the Tulip Family?”

Rody frowned and replied, “Yes, I have only recently inherited the title.”

Dark looked at Rody and laughed loudly. It sounded like he was desperate. He instantly pulled out his scimitar and roared as he rushed towards Rody.

It was a surprise that nobody expected. Before the soldier beside Rody could respond, Dark had already knocked him down. Dark raised his sharp scimitar and slashed at Rody who now laid on the ground...

In a hurry, Rody could not dodge properly so, he rolled away. He narrowly avoided the attack only to hear the sound of screaming. The soldier, who carried his stretcher was cut into two. Dark saw Rody rolling away and he flipped his sword to slash at him again.

Muse's had the fastest reaction. When Muse saw that Dark had already begun to swing his sword, she quickly jumped over to cover Rody's body. She screamed as Dark slashed her back. However, it was done in a haste therefore, the slash did not hit any vital areas. Muse just felt the pain on her back. Soon, she felt dizzy and she fainted.

The officer who was kneeling on the ground also reacted quickly. He managed to block Dark's third slash. By then, the other soldiers had all pulled out their swords as they rushed towards Dark.

Rody was lost when Muse threw herself on top of him and screamed in pain. He automatically held her and touched the fresh blood on her back. When she fainted, Rody felt a piercing pain in his heart and he almost teared up.

Several soldiers quickly pulled Rody and Muse to a secure location at the back. They then formed a circle around them to protect them.

Dark kicked the officer at his side. He saw that Rody was protected by a group. He knew that he would not be successful that

day. He was filled with hatred but without any other choice, he could only withdraw and escape.

The soldiers started to give chase but Rody suddenly shouted, “Do not chase him!” After that, he signaled with his eyes for the archers beside him, to put down their bows and arrows. Dark ran a couple of steps and noticed that nobody was chasing him. He could not help but turned around to look.

He saw Rody standing up with the support of a soldier. After that, Rody loudly said, “Without my order, you are not allowed to shoot the arrows!” He then glanced at Muse before he gritted his teeth and asked, “Mister Dark, why do you want to kill me?”

In the distance, Dark’s face was pale as he fiercely replied, “I am an honest man! At first, I did not know that you were the Duke of the Tulip Family. I only thought that you were a noble. I heard that the Duke of the Tulip Family was in Watt Fortress. I wanted to take this opportunity to follow you so that I could enter the city and assassinate him! Hmph, count your lucky stars! If I had known you were the Duke of the Tulip Family, I would have killed you long ago!”

Rody replied loudly, “I respect you for saving our lives but why do you hate me so much that you want to kill me?”

Dark did not avert his gaze and kept his eyes on Rody. He then exclaimed, “I am not afraid to tell you! I was one of your father’s subordinates! However, your father personally killed my brother! After that, I fled to the grasslands. My life’s greatest desire is to kill the Tulip Family so that I can avenge my brother!”

Rody sighed. He was surrounded by soldiers and it would have been easy to give an order for the archers to shoot him down. However, that person had saved his life. As such, Rody could not bring himself to do it.

Gritting his teeth Rody shouted, “Give him his horse and let him go!”

The soldiers were dumbfounded but they still followed his order. Dark glared at Rody and hatefully shouted, “Duke of the Tulip Family, even if you do not kill me today, I will find another opportunity in the future and still kill you!” After he finished speaking, he took out his bow and shot an arrow. The arrow flew and embedded itself on the walls above the city gate. The arrow shook. Without looking at his horse, Dark turned around and rode away.

Rody was furious. He looked at Muse in his arms. Her eyes were closed and he felt a stabbing pain in his heart. He then shouted, “Quickly, get the military doctor! Get all the magicians who can use healing spells as well!”

He was actually very weak but he forced himself to stand up and speak loudly. The moment he started to relax, he felt drowsy and soon fell unconscious. However, he did not forget to hold on to Muse's hand.

Chapter 88: Mysterious Visitor at Night

Reuben and Sieg rushed out the moment they heard news of the duke's return to the city. Jojo, who also heard the news ran outside. She then saw a team of soldiers surrounding the bed and her tears immediately started to flow.

When she reached the front, she saw her lover on a soft bed. However, she did not see his injuries instead she saw him holding on to a girl with long hair. She could not breathe and she almost fainted.

They rushed the duke to the garrison. The numerous military doctors and magicians of the Northwest Legion were present. They made full use of their medication and magic to save the life of His Excellency. When they saw that the duke was out of danger, only then did Sieg and Reuben stopped feeling anxious. Muse had earlier been separated from Rody. The officer at the gates told Sieg what happened. He also related the duke's order which was given before the duke fainted. Rody was the Commander-in-Chief of the army and his words were considered military orders. Sieg had no intention to disobey and tried his best to save Muse's life as well.

While everyone rushed around, Jojo stood at the side feeling anxious. However, she did not interrupt them. She carefully took a peek at the unconscious woman. Although the unconscious woman looked pale, she was comparable to Jojo in terms of beauty. Jojo could only keep her feelings of panic, fear, and grief to herself. She left the room. She then went and hid in her room.

The moment she entered her room, she kicked the chair. After that, she forcefully knocked down a tub on the table. She was angry and bitter. However, after she sat quietly for a while, she was still worried about the well-being of her lover. She then went out to summon two of the Imperial Guards to go and gather information.

Jadelina, who saw Jojo's outburst, hid herself far away from Jojo. She also rushed outside and saw the duke from a distance. She hoped that the duke would be safe. Although she was young, she was extremely wise. Otherwise, she would not have risked her life to beg for leniency. Although she thought that the duke was cold blooded enough to kill ten of her fellow villagers, he was also compassionate enough to not pursue her brother who was a deserter. She also knew that letting the other villagers go free was extremely rare. That day, she had seen Rody's handsome figure in battle formation from a small hill nearby. She was scared but she saw the young Duke of the Tulip Family sweeping pass all of his obstacles. She was impressed. She understood that the safety of Watt Fortress was dependent on the duke. If the duke died, the Great Moon Kingdom would be able to press forward and everyone would be dead.

After all the commotion, things slowly calmed down. Rody and Muse were both tended by the military doctors and magicians. Although they were unconscious, there were no further major problems.

Night time approached and the soldiers in the garrison were on patrol. As the duke and His Majesty's special envoy were both present, they were more cautious than usual.

Behind the garrison was a warehouse used to store military supplies. In the middle of the night, a group of soldiers patrolled the area around the warehouse. The sound of their footsteps and the torches in their hands scared off a few sparrows in the trees.

When the footsteps had gone further away, the door of the warehouse suddenly opened a little. A silhouette stepped out and gently closed the door.

The silhouette decided to look around first. In the darkness, one could see that he wore the heavy armor of a cavalryman. He peeped through his black helmet which was covering his face. His eyes were the only part of his body exposed.

He moved very gracefully. It was impossible to walk around in an armor without making any sound but he was very intelligent. He seemed to know the layout of the area. He bypassed a group of patrol officers at the corridor before arriving at the backyard.

The backyard was where Rody rested. At that moment, he was seriously injured and Sieg had placed more soldiers there to guard him. From afar, it was visible that there were a dozen energetic Central Cavalry soldiers standing in the backyard. They had received orders from Sieg. Without permission, nobody was allowed to go near the backyard otherwise, he would be killed on the spot.

The black figure stood at a distance for a long time. After that, he extended his hands and made a gesture in the dark. His body then slowly turned transparent before he became fully invisible.

The soldiers guarding the entrance heard a sound coming from the bushes. The soldiers were all terrified and pulled out their swords. The leader took two of them with him to investigate but did not find anything. Suddenly, they felt a gust of wind blow from their sides. Before they could react, they felt dizzy. All the soldiers soon felt weak and fell down without making a sound.

The backyard was quiet and the door to the room was closed. The figure in armor suddenly appeared out of thin air under the moonlight. He looked at the door for a moment and whispered, "Hmm, Sieg is not too stupid after all. He actually put a trap here for magicians but how could such a trap stop me?"

That figure slowly stretched out his hand and a silvery light burst out of his hand. The silvery light soon transformed into a lightsaber. After that, he threw the lightsaber at the door. Without any sound or sign, a curtain of light appeared in front of the door to block the lightsaber. The curtain of light shook when it came into contact with the lightsaber and gradually disappeared. Likewise, the lightsaber shattered and immediately disappeared without a trace.

The figure laughed lightly. After that, he stepped forward and pushed open the door to enter the room.

On top of a large bed in the room was Rody with his eyes closed. He was still unconscious. The figure went towards the bed and looked at Rody. He then sighed and whispered, "Ahh, Old Mark is really a scoundrel. The 'Limit Crystal' is not a good thing. How could he just casually give it to him? He is just a small Grade 1 swordsman with a seed of power inside him. He just got lucky. He can skip learning the ordinary fighting energy and start with the golden fighting energy. But how can he succeed without a few years of practice? Using the seed of power to enhance his strength is not a reliable method. Before I can even figure out how to teach him, that old bastard has already given him a 'Limit Crystal'. Won't that make things worse? Two hours of unlimited power. It is great when in use but after the time is up, the person will feel extremely miserable! Now, a lot of effort will be required..."

The figure walked up and down around the bed. Without touching Rody's arms which were placed above his chest, he produced a faint light and poured that light into Rody's body. After a while, he sighed and stopped, "No, if I keep doing this, I will lose my soul before I heal him!"

After that, he walked out of the room in big strides. He looked around for a moment and then he entered the next room.

The next room was occupied by Muse. She initially had a shoulder injury, which had not fully recovered. She then traveled for days despite her weak body and finally, she took the blow from Dark's sword. Although she had received emergency treatment, she was still unconscious.

The figure looked at Muse who was lying down on the bed and sighed, "No choice. Although it is troublesome, I still have to do it like this." He went up to Muse and held down her forehead gently with his hand. He then mumbled something and a sudden burst of light appeared in the room. The light completely covered him and

the whole bed. Fortunately, the doors and windows were shut tight. Otherwise, the light would have shot outside and would be discovered by others in the dark.

After the light faded, Muse moaned. She felt something cold on her forehead. It felt like cold river water flowed down from her head and scattered into numerous branches. It spread throughout her body. She was having a fever, after sustaining such a serious injury. As a result, she moaned from the comfortable and cooling feeling.

She then heard a powerful and strange voice slowly say, "Are you well? If you are well, get up quickly."

Muse was startled and immediately sat up only to see an armored person standing by her bed in the dark. His arms were folded as he looked at her. When she woke up and saw the figure there, Muse instinctively wanted to scream. However, the person quickly reached out and covered her mouth. "Idiot, do not scream! If you scream, the Tulip Family will die."

When Muse heard that, she swallowed her scream. After breathing a sigh of relief, she pushed aside the other person's hand and asked, "Who are you? Where is this place?"

The figure laughed and said, "Black Veil Saint, now Ro... now the Tulip Family has a big problem. I came here to help the duke but I cannot help him alone. There are things that I will need your help with."

Muse was bewildered and frowned. "You are so sneaky. Who are you?"

The figure sneered. "Whether you believe me or not, you will find out once you follow me... but you must be quiet." After that, he turned around and walked out of the door.

Muse got up from the bed feeling perturbed. She found that her body felt good. Although her magic had not returned, her injuries

had already healed.

Chapter 89: Skeleton of the Night

Muse was shocked when she saw that Rody was short of breath. She walked towards Rody's bed and held his face. A drop of tear fell onto Rody's face.

The figure behind her groaned in boredom and seemed to say to himself, "I really do not understand human emotions..." However, Muse was too agitated to hear him.

Muse sighed. Then, she slowly turned and asked, "What happened to him?"

"Actually, he harmed himself... Frankly speaking, this is also partly your fault." The figure sighed and whispered, "In fact, with his current strength, he would have been killed by your 200 Roland Knights. However, he had a way to enhance his own strength by several times for a short period of time. After that, he met you and you cast that 'God's Lightning Axe' spell. It was too powerful. He was already so weak that you could easily kill him without effort. Although he used a secret technique to increase his strength by several times, he was still no match for a Black Veil Saint like you... The spell that you used is supposed be a forbidden spell am I right? Even if he had increased his strength by several times and obtained the 'Holy Light' energy, he still would not be able to withstand it. Your one spell had destroyed his 'Holy Light' energy. The golden fighting energy he had just learned was also destroyed by you. He is only a warrior but he was luckier than others. He could skip learning how to use fighting energy and immediately start practicing golden fighting energy. As it is a shortcut, it is also more dangerous. He would have been able to recover if he had about half a month to slowly recuperate. However, he had been on the run. He also had to fight on a few occasions and even got himself injured. At first... Sigh, there is no point telling you so much... I will just say this, he was like a half-constructed building smashed by you to the point that it was about

to fall apart. Before it could be repaired, a few more people went up the damaged building and destroyed it further. Now... the body has no more problems. However, when he recovers it will be just like this. Whether it is fighting energy or golden fighting energy, it will forever just be a dream from now on..."

When Muse heard this, she was sad and sighed. "How do you know such details? How do you know all of our actions? There was nobody else besides us..."

The figure simply replied, "I just know. Right now, do you want him to stay as a Grade 2 swordsman for the rest of his life?"

Muse frowned. "I do not understand. How can I help?"

The figure spread out his hands and said, "I definitely cannot save him on my own. Although I am considered his friend, I will lose my soul if I save him. I am not that kind. You are the Black Veil Saint. If I am not wrong, you are only one step away from learning 'Domain Force'. You can already be considered to be at the peak of sorcery. If I don't ask you, then who else can I ask for help?"

Muse shook her head, "I am now..."

"Red dragon blood. Am I right?" The figure laughed. "Although I have not seen a dragon, I believe that the people of Roland Continent including the bravest person in the Temple would never dare provoke a dragon. What dragon blood? Do you think they are brave enough to kill a dragon and take its blood? I believe the red dragon is not really a dragon but just a kind of magic beast."

Muse nodded. "Correct. We call it red dragon blood but it is actually the blood of a red crawling magic beast which looks like a dragon."

"That magic beast was not a particularly fearsome creature. However, its blood was terrified sorcerers. If a sorcerer even drank a bit of the blood, he or she would lose his or her magic. However,

there was also a cure. If the sorcerer could find and kill a red dragon and obtain its magic stone, the sorcerer could be cured.”

“Magic stones?” The figure laughed again. “I have a lot of them but I do not know if there is a red dragon magic stone here.” He stretched out his hands and like magic, revealed some bright multicolored crystals in his hands.

Muse glanced at them and her facial expression changed. She was a senior sorceress and naturally knew about such things. The figure had taken out magic stones of various magic beasts. On top of that, most of the magic stones were from high-level magic beasts. Muse knew that killing a low-level magic beast itself was no easy task. As for high-level magic beasts, a senior sorcerer or knight would most likely die trying to kill it. At most, they would only have a chance of escaping. However, the person before her could immediately produce so many magic stones of high-level magic beasts in his hand, as though they were ordinary stones.

“Where did you find so many of these?”

“Hmm... Those days, my master liked to collect strange things. He took people with him and sneaked into the Roland Continent. These were part of his collection. Take a look and see if there is a red dragon magic stone in here. If it is not here, I still have more magic stones that I have not taken out. I did not take all of them out because I have too many and it would not be nice to do so.”

After hearing his words, Muse’s jaw almost dropped all the way to the ground and she thought to herself about how strange the figure was.

Magic stone collection? Does he not know that you can even sell magic stones from low-level magic beasts for hundreds of gold coins? For sorcerers, these magic stones are treasured objects that can enhance their power! They are much more expensive than magic crystals. If it is a magic stone from a high-level magic beast, it could easily cost tens of thousands or even hundreds of

thousands of gold coins!

In the Roland Continent, there were many small mercenary groups which specialized in hunting magic beasts. They sold their magic stones for a living. However, most of them were only brave enough to hunt the low-level beasts.

The figure noticed that Muse did not move and thought that there were no red dragon magic stones there. So, he threw the stones to the ground. He then produced more stones out of thin air.

Muse started to feel dizzy with confusion. Although she grew up in the Roland Continent, she had never seen that many magic stones in front of her. With a glance, she saw that most of his collection were magic stones from high-level magic beasts which were usually stored in the Temple.

Muse took a deep breath to calm herself. She then slowly picked up two crimson colored crystals and sighed. “These are the ones. But, they are extremely valuable... I think it is better if you keep them.”

The figure laughed and said, “This kind of thing may be precious to sorcerers but it is merely a beautiful gem to the rest of us. Having said that, this is something Master had left behind. I cannot just give them all to you.” The man then waved his hands and all of the other magic stones disappeared.

Muse looked at the red dragon magic stone in excitement. She was originally very arrogant but in the past few days, she had experienced extreme inconvenience because she had lost her magic. Now, the object to restore her magic was in her hands. How could she not be excited?

The figure saw her in a daze and said, “You better act quickly. It is getting late. I will no longer be able to handle this when the sky brightens.”

Muse looked at him and asked, “You want to save him. So, why are you acting so secretive?”

The figure shook his head and replied, “Meet others? When people see me, it will be strange if they are not frightened to death.” He then looked at Muse and became impatient. “Little girl, you speak too much! Act quickly! How do you use this magic stone? Do you eat it?”

Muse glared back at him fiercely and unhappily said, “Have you seen people eating stones?” After that, she looked at the figure again. Gritting her teeth, she pricked her finger with a sharp edge of the magic stone until blood flowed. She then carefully dripped a drop of her blood to spread on the magic stone. After that, she closed her eyes.

The figure looked at Muse curiously. Muse suddenly opened her eyes and said, “You better think of something. There will be a lot of light when I use sorcery and people might probably see it.”

The man folded his arms and lightly replied, “Don’t worry. I have already prepared countermeasures! Nobody outside will be able to see the light from in here!”

Muse nodded and immediately closed her eyes. Suddenly, the magic stone in her hand gave out a faint red light. The light was not strong but under the light, the red magic stone slowly changed color as if sunlight was shining on melting ice. The rock hard magic stone slowly changed into a ball of red light. After that, the ball of light which was on Muse’s palm, bit by bit entered Muse's body through her skin. Muse’s expression became more serious as she creased her eyebrows. One of her palms had completely turned red. Then, the red light moved towards the rest of her body. Gradually her entire body was covered in red light.

Muse suddenly opened her eyes and took a deep breath. A red fog spiraled down from her head. It eventually wrapped around her whole body. The red fog became more and more concentrated

before it finally disappeared.

Although Muse was still standing there, she now exuded a different aura. She felt like the Black Veil Saint who fought with Rody earlier on. Her eyes shone like she was holy and sacred. Smiling, she gently waved her left hand and the grassland clothing transformed into her black robes. Her appearance was once again that of the fearsome Black Veil Saint.

The person next to her laughed loudly and clapped his hands. “Beautiful! Beautiful! How fascinating! Now you have the presence of a sorcerer! The colorful display was even more fascinating than fireworks.”

Muse took a deep breath. With a wave of her hands, a ball of light appeared. It was evident that her magic had recovered. She was excited and she ignored the figure’s nonsensical chatter.

Looking back at the figure, Muse sighed. “Whatever happens, I would like to thank you. If it weren’t for you, I would have had to wait until I got back to the Roland Continent before I could recover my magic.”

The figure then waved his hands and replied, “Since I have helped you to recover your magic, now is your turn to save him.”

Muse thought to herself and said, “The ultimate healing spell ‘Reshape Origin’ will be able to save him. However, this spell is also one of the greatest forbidden spells. I have never used it before.” She paused for a moment and looked back at the figure before saying, “You look like a high-level mage. You should be as powerful as I am. I heard that the Radiant Empire also has an ultimate healing spell. Why do you not save him yourself? You should be more experienced than me.”

The figure shook his head and replied, “I know the spell but I cannot use it. If I try to use it, I will be finished before I get to save him.”

Muse frowned and asked, “Why?”

The figure laughed and replied, “Let me tell you, magicians and sorcerers are different. Magicians train using their own power. Depending on how much they cultivate, they can only use that amount of power. Once they finished using their spiritual power, they can continue to cultivate themselves and store more power in their body. However, I am different from the other magicians. Although I have more spiritual power than the other magicians, I cannot cultivate. The more magic I use, the less spiritual power I will have left but I will be unable to replenish my spiritual power. This is because... because I have no mortal body!”

“No mortal body?” Muse was shocked.

“That's enough. Now that you have magic, just use the see-through spell to look at me. You can see through the armor. But, I might as well just show you...” The moment he finished talking, the figure took off his helmet.

Muse looked at the person who removed his helmet, to find a skull. As the lower jaw of the skull moved, a human voice could be heard. “Do you see this?”

There was silence for about three seconds and then Muse screamed, “Aaaaah!”

The skeleton quietly looked at Muse and patiently waited for her to finish. She screamed for a while before she finally stopped. Then, she stepped back. She opened her hands and fireballs appeared in front of both her hands. She then vigilantly looked at the skeleton.

The skeleton's jaw moved again as it laughed and said, “Do not be afraid. Your reaction is not much different from that guy when he first met me...”

Although Muse was powerful, she was still frightened. In the Roland Continent, she had seen skeleton soldiers summoned by

the sorcerers. However, this particular skeleton could talk, laugh, walk and also use magic. She had never seen anything like him before.

Resisting the impulse to shoot the fireballs from her hands, Muse took a deep breath and asked, “What kind of... thing are you?”

The skeleton laughed. “I am a skeleton. Strictly speaking, I am not a thing... I am a life! A life that my Master created! A great magical life! My name is Andy!”

Chapter 90: Reshape Origin

Seeing that Muse was still being vigilant, Andy shook his head and said, “Looks like this kid was right in calling you an idiot. If I really wanted to harm you, would I even help you regain your magic? I just want to save him... If he dies, I will lose my last remaining friend.”

Muse found his words to be reasonable and finally put away her hands and extinguished the fireballs. However, she still stared at Andy.

Andy shrugged which made Muse feel weird.

The skeleton actually shrugged.

It was something she had never seen before.

“Let me tell you again, I do not have a mortal body. My current body is made out of refined crystallized energy. All of my energy comes from my body itself. The more I use it, the weaker I will become. When the energy is used up, I am finished. That is why although I know how to use the ultimate healing spell, I am unable to use it. If I use it, I will die... Although I quite like this kid, I will not exchange my life for his.” After that, Andy laughed. His figure looked peculiar when he laughed. “However, if it is you, I am sure you will be willing to exchange your life for his.”

Muse’s face turned red and she coldly replied, “What nonsense are you talking about? I will save him and that’s it!”

Andy moved out of the way, a few steps back towards the door. Muse stood in front of Rody and carefully inspected him. She sighed and then she slowly opened her arms, closed her eyes and chanted a spell.

A ray of milky, white light seemed to descend from heaven. The ray passed through the room’s ceiling and shrouded Rody’s body. After that, his body started to change...

First, the clothes he wore started to tear and it revealed his strong body. After that, there was a soft sound and his ear muffs disappeared. A pair of long ears extended through his hair.

Fortunately, Muse had her eyes closed as she concentrated on chanting the spell. Otherwise, she would have definitely screamed if she saw them.

Rody's muscles started to tremble. It appeared as though the muscles under his skin were flowing like water. They gradually inflated and his skin began to crack, revealing a bloody look. However, within the light beam, not a single drop of blood was spilled.

Gradually, all the skin on Rody's body cracked from head to toe. It revealed a bloodied and scarred body. However, the cracked skin quickly vanished in a puff of smoke and it was soon replaced with new skin that rapidly formed under the light.

The hair on his head along with his scalp disintegrated and scattered away. But immediately, a new scalp and golden hair grew out. In just a moment, the golden hair had grown so long that it almost flowed down the bedside. However, the hair was a bit strange. For a moment, it was golden. After that, it glowed black and then it changed back to gold. It seemed very unstable.

The strangest thing was Rody's ears. His original pointy ears slowly changed form. It became smaller and shorter until they were like that of a normal person's. However, as soon as they became normal, the ears would grow back a little. There was also a faint gray light coming from Rody's head which seemed to compete with the golden light. His ears kept growing longer and then shorter non-stop.

Muse was sweating profusely and she had turned pale. Suddenly, she heard Andy shout, "Stop! Stop, that's enough! You don't need to continue anymore! Stop, quickly!"

Muse relaxed and the beam of light disappeared.

She looked at Rody again and saw that his body had fully regenerated and all his wounds had disappeared without a trace. His golden hair almost touched the ground and his face gave off a gentle radiance. Then she glanced down and saw Rody's naked body. Muse screamed as she immediately turned her head away and closed her eyes. Her cheeks were red.

Andy laughed mischievously. He then approached them and slowly whispered to himself, "Luckily, I stopped her in time. Otherwise, the 'God's Smile' would have come off and revealed his original face... his Yin Yang face. If that happens, he won't be able to meet with people any longer."

Andy ignored Muse's blushing face and stood in front of Rody. He stretched his finger and a small flame appeared. He then gently pointed at Rody's forehead until the small flame was injected into Rody's body. After that, Andy laughed. "Alright, it is finally done. You reshaped his body and I injected a little bit of spiritual power to help him collect his scattered fighting energy. As long as he slowly cultivates himself, he will slowly recover. This kid is really lucky. He has a high-level magician and a high-level sorceress to help him."

Muse's eyes were still closed as she said, "Don't say any more. You... Quickly cover up his body!"

She waited a long time but did not receive a reply from the skeleton. Muse could not help but opened her eyes to find the room empty except for Rody and herself. The skeleton had disappeared.

While she was in a daze, she heard a noise from outside the room.

That night, Sieg could not stop worrying about the duke. When it was dawn, he rushed over to see him and was stunned to find the scene before him. His personally selected elites were all lying down across the yard outside the duke's room. All of them were lethargic and they could not wake up no matter how hard Sieg kicked them.

Sieg was shocked and he immediately rushed towards the room.

However, about 10 steps away from the room, Sieg seemed to hit an invisible wall. Sieg tried to bump against the wall several times but found that he could not move forward. Alarmed and angry, he mobilized a large group of soldiers and even alerted Reuben.

The magicians of the Northwest Legion also tried several times to get past the wall but found that the whole room was sealed off by a powerful spell. They tried to figure it out for a very long time but they still could not break through the invisible wall.

By then, a large group of soldiers and magicians had assembled. However, no matter what spell they used, the invisible wall continued to block the way. Reuben was furious as his soldiers were of a higher grade compared to Sieg's. He used his fighting energy and charged at the invisible wall. There was a loud thump and the soldiers watched helplessly as the Northwest Legion's Regiment Commander bounced off and collapsed against another wall.

As they helped the flustered Reuben back on his feet, a white ray of light appeared from the sky. The light seemed to appear from the clouds and directly passed through the roof of the building.

Everyone was stunned by that spectacular sight. Even Jojo who came barefooted after hearing the news was stunned.

Everyone was still in a daze when the ray of light finally disappeared and a figure came out of the duke's room. The figure wore a full set of the Imperial Army's cavalry armor.

Sieg was alarmed and he questioned the figure. However, the figure ignored him. Reuben then ordered the archers to shoot arrows at the figure but the arrows could not penetrate the invisible wall. All the arrows fell to the ground.

The figure in armor then laughed. He slowly became transparent. He then disappeared into thin air in front of everyone.

The irritated Reuben then used all of his fighting energy and

charged towards the invisible wall regardless of the people blocking him. There was a sound of an explosion as the wall suddenly disappeared without a trace. Reuben was unable to stop himself in time and smashed through the door of the duke's room. The door shattered.

Sieg was the fastest to respond. He was the first to rush in but the moment he entered the room, he was dumbfounded.

He saw that the duke had woken up and quickly wrapped himself in a blanket. However, Sieg had already seen it all. Under the sheets, the duke was naked.

The beautiful woman who came back with the duke stood by his bed looking flushed, helpless and speechless. Sieg did not know when but the woman had already put on a black robe.

Rody's face was flushed. He did not know what happened. He looked stupidly at Muse, Sieg, and Reuben who was still lying down on the floor. He did not understand why they were there. He did not know why Reuben crashed into the door and also why he was naked.

After a moment, Rody slowly opened his mouth and said, "I just woke up... you all..."

Sieg suddenly helped Reuben up from the ground and quickly walked out the door. He stopped in front of the door and faced the soldiers who were prepared to rush in. He shouted, "Fall back! Fall back! No one is allowed to come closer!"

All the soldiers immediately stopped but Jojo did not care. She ran barefooted towards the door. Sieg and Reuben had the same thought and quickly blocked her from going further. Jojo glanced at Sieg and Reuben's strange expressions and ignored them as she forced herself past them.

Reuben and Sieg did not dare to obstruct the noblewoman and could only move aside. However, they could see the helpless smile

on each other's face and knew that there would be big problems coming soon.

Jojo ran inside and saw Rody wrapped in blanket, looking embarrassed. After that, she saw the black-robed woman standing at his bedside. Her heart almost stopped. Her eyes were red and tears started to flow.

Rody was also surprised when he saw Jojo. If Rody was afraid of any woman, it would be Miss Jojo. That was because of her special identity as Seth's old lover. In front of her, Rody felt like he was walking on a tightrope. If he was not careful, his real identity would be exposed.

Before Rody could speak, Jojo already opened her mouth and spoke in an ill-mannered tone. "Seth, what is the meaning of this?"

Rody had collected his thoughts but before he could answer her, Muse calmly said, "Nothing. I only helped to treat his injuries." When Muse saw the beautiful woman with grief in her eyes and Rody's face, she felt pain and resentment.

"Treatment? What kind of treatment would need him to take off his clothes?" Jojo was flustered.

Muse did not spare her a glance. She laughed coldly and then spoke to Rody, "Put on your clothes first. I will wait to speak to you." After that, she walked towards the door and said, "Move!"

Her magic had returned and her every move gave off a faint yet powerful magical presence. Jojo felt a chill behind her back and involuntarily stepped back.

Muse ignored the other people and walked out of the door. She saw that the yard was full of soldiers and she walked back to her own room.

After Muse went out, Jojo went towards Rody's bedside and stomped her feet. "Seth! You! I was worried about you but...!" Her tears flowed as she spoke.

Rody was confused. He did not know what had just happened. He then said, “You need to go out first.”

Jojo heard his indifferent tone and felt wronged. She could not stop her tears from flowing. Rody looked at her and sighed as he whispered, “Miss Jojo, I still need to put on my clothes!”

Jojo glared fiercely at Rody and coldly said, “What are you afraid of? It’s not like I have never seen it before!” After that, she turned around and walked out. Her heart was filled with pain and grief. Ignoring the others, she ran away without stopping.

Sieg and Reuben were standing in the yard. They felt that the duke was just as formidable in capturing the hearts of women as he was in fighting. When they saw another beautiful woman by his side, they smiled wryly. They saw that the duke was awake and looked healthy. Although what happened earlier was strange, as long as the duke was alright, he would be able to tell them about it later.

After that, Sieg heard the duke call from inside the room, “Commander Sieg!”

Sieg immediately replied loudly, “Your subordinate is present!”

“Order everyone outside to withdraw! Without... without my orders, no one can enter!”

Sieg immediately gave the order for the soldiers to line up. After that, the soldiers were sent back to their respective posts, leaving only a dozen soldiers guarding outside the room.

While Reuben and Sieg were sending away the remaining people, they heard the duke call out again, “Commander Sieg!”

There was a moment of silence before the duke continued to speak. However, his voice sounded like a helpless and forced laugh.

“Ask someone to send me some clothes.”

Chapter 91: The Pain of Separation

Rody was neatly dressed. He felt clean and fresh. He could also feel his dexterity coming back. Miraculously, he felt even better than before he was injured. However, he had some doubts so he went next door to ask Muse.

Muse was standing in front of the window when she heard Rody enter the room. She turned around and looked at him. She slowly said in a cold voice, "Do not speak, listen to me."

Muse then explained what happened the night before. She spoke slowly and indifferently but her eyes were constantly observing Rody's expression. Rody was puzzled. He frowned and said, "So it was Andy. When I get back, I will need to ask him in greater detail."

Muse lightly replied, "That is your problem. Your business here is now finished and I have also recovered so..." Muse hesitated for a moment before saying, "So, I will be leaving."

"Leave?" Rody's heart jumped. A feeling that was difficult to explain rose in his heart as he asked, "Why do you want to leave?"

Muse tried to sound cold as she replied, "Why can't I leave? When I lost my magic, I was your prisoner! But now I have recovered completely. Do you have the ability to stop me? Watt Fortress may have tens of thousands of soldiers but if I want to leave, will they be able to stop me?"

Rody was agitated. He walked up to her and said in a low voice, "Prisoner? You're saying that you were a prisoner? That day I was seriously injured. If you wanted to go, how could I have stopped you? You said you were a prisoner but along the way here, you had plenty of chances to escape!" Rody looked straight at Muse. His eyes gave a complicated gaze.

Muse could not look him in the eye so, she turned away. She

sighed and said, “Why do you want to keep me here? You know that I am not from here. There are also matters at the grasslands... I need to go back to the Temple and warn them about King Sauron’s conspiracy to subvert the Temple. I have to go back. On top of that... staying here... what is the use of staying?”

Rody stared at her without speaking. Muse’s heart softened as she said, “Both of us are people with high positions and big responsibilities... I... If I asked you to follow me to the Roland Continent, would you be willing to?”

Rody almost shouted, ‘I am willing!’ but he remained clear-headed. After a moment of silence, he said softly, “Very well, I understand.” He then looked at Muse and reluctantly laughed. “I will send you out of the city.”

Rody ordered his men to prepare the horses. After that, he accompanied Muse out of the Watt Fortress alone and they moved towards the northeast.

As the sun rose, two horses walked side by side in the wilderness. Rody was unhappy. He accompanied her stretch after stretch. Finally, they stopped their horses after traveling for about 10 li.

“Alright, let us split up here. You do not need to accompany me anymore,” Muse said softly. Rody sat on his horse and looked at Muse without saying anything.

Muse was heartbroken. She took out a ring and gave it to Rody. Her voice trembled, “This is a keepsake to remember me by. I have kept it with me since my childhood. After I leave today, I do not know when we will meet again...” Her voice choked with sadness and her tears started to flow.

Rody took it and looked at the small ring in his hands like it was the most important thing in the world. He gritted his teeth and said, “I will keep this properly and protect it as though it were my own eyes!” Rody then took out his scimitar and cut a lock of his blonde hair. After that, he cut out a piece of cloth and wrapped his

hair before giving it to Muse. “I do not have anything to give you so, take this to remember me by. In the future... if you do not forget me, I will not forget you!”

Muse trembled. She took the hair wrapped in cloth and kept it close to her chest. She then looked at Rody and said softly, “If you do not forget me, I will not forget you too!”

After that, she whipped the horse and the horse ran a few dozen steps before it stopped. She then turned around and asked, “Seth, I heard that woman call you Seth! Is that your name?”

During the past few days, they called each other ‘idiot’ and ‘Duke of Tulip Family’ but they had never called each other by their names.

Rody shook his head and shouted, “No, Seth is a name used by others! Remember, my name is Rody!” He then paused and added, “Only those close to me know me by this name!”

Muse looked happy when she heard the words, ‘those close to me’. She nodded and loudly replied, “You command a lot of soldiers and you are an important figure. The bureaucracy is like the battlefield. Many want to claim your life. It is easier to dodge the thrust of an open spear than to avoid being stabbed from the back. Be careful.”

Rody laughed loudly and replied, “King Sauron is a very ambitious man and must be a very formidable person! Although you are strong, you are not crafty at all. Therefore, you need to be careful.”

Muse turned red and loudly replied. “I will remember that Rody! Remember, Muse is my religious name. My real name is Mouceria. If you are willing to, you can call me Mouse!”

After having said that, she turned around and went on her way without stopping. She left Rody sitting on the horse, as he silently repeated her name, “Mouse...”

Rody waited until she disappeared from his view before leaving in low spirits. He was young and had never experienced the pain of separation. He felt depressed as he rode all the way back to the city.

Sieg saw both of them leaving the city but only one person came back. He also noted the duke's unhappiness. He spoke carefully and avoided agitating Rody.

Rody then heard from Sieg that Jojo was a special envoy dispatched by His Majesty. Rody sighed and despite his reluctance, he ordered his men to request for Jojo's presence.

When Jojo came out, she was feeling gloomy. She simply handed the emperor's orders to Rody and then she turned around without a word.

Rody was already depressed so, he paid no attention to Jojo's actions. When Jojo turned around, she had hoped for her lover to call out to her. However, there was no response. Once again, she felt wronged as she had endured an arduous journey and had rushed there for nothing. Her feet started to move faster and she was finally out of sight.

Rody sighed and carefully read the orders of His Majesty the Emperor. After he read it, he frowned and said, "General Reuben, please summon the commanders of the army."

Within a short time, all the different rank commanders of the Northwest Legion had gathered. This time, Rody did not modestly decline Reuben and sat in the chair of the Commander-in-Chief.

When all the officers were in attendance, Rody announced the orders of His Majesty.

"General Reuben is dismissed as the Regimental Commander of the Northwest Legion and is to report back to the Imperial Capital. The Northwest Legion will temporarily be under the command of Northwest Military Special Envoy, Duke Seth Rudolph."

“The Northwest Legion is to remain and repair the Watt Fortress. Opening hostilities against the Great Moon Kingdom is not allowed without His Majesty’s orders!”

“The Central Cavalry is to remain until the Northwest Legion is appointed a new Regimental Commander. Once a new Regimental Commander is appointed to the Northwest Legion, Duke Seth Rudolph is to report back to the Imperial Capital! The Central Cavalry is also recalled.”

After the orders were announced, everybody frowned.

Reuben was relieved of his post. Everybody had seen it coming. However, His Majesty’s orders to repair the Watt Fortress and not open hostilities against the Great Moon Kingdom was strange. Based on common sense, His Majesty should have dispatched the Southern Legion to the Northwest and battle with the Great Moon Kingdom to regain lost ground.

On top of that, they believed that once the two countries go back to war, the Duke of the Tulip Family should obviously be the Commander-in-Chief. However, His Majesty did not seem to have any intention to fight. His Majesty also intended to transfer the duke back to the Imperial Capital and send someone else to the Northwest Legion.

Among the soldiers, only Sieg and Gordon understood. Before the expedition, Rody had already told them that their objective was only to save Watt Fortress. The Empire would not fight against the Great Moon Kingdom. Although the Empire appeared strong, it was actually very weak. The military was lax and the financial situation did not seem good. As a result, His Majesty did not want to recklessly fight against the Great Moon Kingdom. Holding the Watt Fortress and protecting the Northwest region was enough. The captured provinces and the rest were up to political negotiation and had nothing to do with the army.

Rody coughed twice and the soldiers immediately stopped

murmuring. After looking at them, Rody slowly said, “By the order of His Majesty, I will be taking control of the Northwest Legion from today onwards! Now for my order, from today onwards the whole army is to repair Watt Fortress! The military camp is to remain on alert! Other than the scouts, all other soldiers are not allowed to leave the city without my orders!”

Reuben remained calm and handed over the Regimental Commander’s command seal to Rody in front of everyone. After that, he ignored everyone’s confused expressions as he went out to find his bodyguards. He packed up and was prepared for his journey.

Rody dispersed everyone. He was unhappy. In his opinion, Reuben was not responsible for the defeat of the Northwest Legion. The Northwest Legion had already been weakened by parasites. In such a situation, how could Reuben not be defeated?

Of course, it was Reuben’s fault for not being strict with his own army. However, the general environment in many of the Empire’s armies was likewise. Even the Empire’s most elite Central Cavalry was also like that. How could Reuben have changed the situation on his own?

After that, Rody, Sieg, and Gordon sent Reuben and his bodyguards off to the Imperial Capital. Rody was still unhappy. He then remembered the two parasites in the city and sneered. I have long wanted to punish you. I have returned late and allowed you to stay happy for so many days!

When he returned to the garrison, his subordinates immediately reported to him that Garrison Commander, Fedol and Northwest Commander, Ferara had presented him with a lot of gifts.

Rody entered the hall and saw several heavy boxes on the floor. He ordered the soldiers to open the boxes and he saw that a few of the boxes were full with no less than 100,000 gold coins.

Rody sneered.

These guys really act quickly.

The last time, he had pretended to ask for bribes and earned 100,000 gold coins. All of the money was used to pay the soldiers and build fortifications. He had just returned for one day and the two of them had already sent money again.

“What did they say when they sent this?”

The bodyguard replied, “The two commanders congratulated Your Excellency on returning after a victory and said that this gold was given to reward the army! They also invited Your Excellency to attend the afternoon feast to celebrate the victory of the ‘Lightning God’s Whip’.

Rody smiled and replied, “Well, take these gifts and give them to Sieg. Give a portion of the money to the families of those who perished or those who became disabled. Let Sieg handle the rest of the money.”

The hundreds of thousands of gold coins will be useful. That damn Fedol! According to the law of the Empire, the walls of the fortress have to be 12 meters tall but the walls of Watt fortress are less than 10 meters tall! This parasite only wants money, not his life!

Rody sighed. He could no longer wait. When he gets replaced by someone else, he would not have the right to deal with those two fellows anymore. He ordered his men to dispatch from the Central Cavalry two groups of the Wolves Fang. He then exchanged a few words with the captain and told him to take one group with him. After that, he took the other group and headed towards the banquet.

Ferara and Fedol had already gathered the nobles in the city. They had prepared everything in the mansion. That day, both of them felt greatly relieved.

That day, they heard that Reuben was dismissed by the Emperor

and ordered to return to the Imperial Capital. With Reuben gone, there was nobody left who was familiar with the situation in the Northwest Legion. They had earlier received news from the Imperial Capital that once Reuben returned, he would be court martialled. As long as Reuben was found guilty, he would be the only one to take responsibility for the defeat.

The duke also knows the truth but he has already taken our money. One hundred thousand gold coins! If he dares to become hostile, we will all die together! Haha, we are all corrupted! Hasn't he received our money again as well?

That was why Ferara immediately sent hundreds of thousands of gold coins to the garrison hoping to make the duke an accomplice.

He heard the soldiers announce the arrival of the duke. Ferara felt relieved. As long as he got past the day, everything would be solved.

He dragged Fedol to go out together and greet the duke but felt disdain when he saw Fedol's frightened face. That Garrison Commander was indeed a real oaf. Ferara had plans to report to the people at the Imperial Capital so that they would transfer that useless oaf elsewhere once their problems were solved.

While Ferara was deep in thought, a group of heavily armed Central Cavalry soldiers suddenly burst through the door. All of them had unsheathed their swords. With a murderous look on their face, they rushed in.

Men and women in splendid costumes attending the banquet screamed and ran away. The more courageous ones tried to intimidate the soldiers. However, they were the Wolves Fang soldiers who had followed Rody to the Northwest. They only knew how to take orders from the duke. They grabbed and threw out all the offenders despite their noble ranks.

There were a lot of screams and soon, the entrance was occupied by the soldiers and the venue was empty. After that, the sound of

footsteps could be heard as Rody walked in gloomily.

Ferara was surprised and wanted to walk forward to talk to Rody. However, when Rody saw Ferara, he pointed at Ferara and the frightened Fedol. He ruthlessly shouted, “That’s the two of them! Drag them out and execute them!”

Chapter 92: Kill Immediately

Ferara was shocked, and he immediately retreated. Naturally, he had a few bodyguards who stepped forward to block the way.

Rody waved his hands, and the Wolf Fang soldiers immediately stopped. However, they did not put down their scimitars and glared menacingly at everyone. They were soldiers who had tasted blood on the battlefield. Although Ferara had bodyguards, they were less imposing. A few of the bodyguards were deathly pale and looked as if they had wanted to retreat.

Fedol was frightened and turned pale. Ferara gritted his teeth and shouted loudly, “Your Excellency, what are you doing?! Are you trying to exact revenge?”

Rody put on a confused expression and asked, “Revenge? What revenge?”

Ferara turned pale and loudly shouted, “Your Excellency, we both know about what happened in the Northwest region! Even the crowds here know about it! Isn’t it just a little bit of money? Who has not embezzled the soldier’s money before? If you intend to give us trouble, we will fight till the end! Do not forget, you have also accepted the gold coins!”

After he finished speaking, Ferara unsheathed his sword and fiercely glared at Rody.

Rody laughed and replied, “Commander Ferara, I do not understand what you are saying! What do you mean by embezzling money? I do not understand! I came here today because I discovered that you have committed treason!”

The moment Rody said that, Ferara immediately shouted, “Nonsense! I am a commander of the Empire! How could I have been treacherous? You-you better not speak nonsense!”

Rody coldly snorted and said, “I knew you would never admit to

your guilt!” After that, he clapped his hands and more than 20 soldiers walked into the room. Every two soldiers were carrying a box, and soon, ten boxes were placed in the middle of the open space.

“Commander Fedol, Commander Ferara, I believe you recognize these boxes? They have your family insignia!”

The soldier kicked open one of the boxes to reveal the inside which was full of gold coins.

“Both of you are commanders of the Empire! What are your annual salaries? How many family properties do you have? How did you manage to accumulate so much gold coins with your income?” Rody glared gloomily and hatefully. “You must have had a secret deal with Reuenthal to betray the Empire! Otherwise, how could the Northwest Legion’s army of 200,000 be defeated over 1000 miles? Blackstone Fortress, Trier Fortress and Loulan Fortress are all at strategic areas. How did Reuenthal easily capture these locations? You must have surrendered the fortresses to him! These gold coins are your evidence!”

The Garrison Commander, Fedol, was already very frightened. He rushed forward and screamed, “That is not true! That is not true... Reuenthal did not give us this money! This money is...”

“Shut up!” Ferara scolded and kicked Fedol. His expression turned gloomy as he said, “Your Excellency, your trickery is formidable! Unfortunately, you cannot accuse me of treason with just these boxes of gold coins as proof! After all, gold coins cannot speak! Do you have any evidence of my collaboration with the enemy?”

Ferara’s face was pale. He noticed that some of the things before him were things he had left in his house. Since they had been taken out, it would mean that his house had probably been searched. At that point, he knew he should spare no respect anymore. However, he did not expect the other side to leave out embezzling military

funds and instead immediately accuse him of treason.

‘How can I explain these boxes of gold coins? I cannot admit that these were obtained from corrupt practices. It will also be a dead end...’

Rody smiled coldly and said, “Still dabbling in sophistry!” He waved again, and the Wolf Fang started to approach them and fought against Ferara’s guards. The guards could not win against the Wolf Fang.

In a very short time, the Wolf Fang killed two of Ferara's bodyguards. Out of fear, the nobles continued to scream and everyone else who did not want to die knelt down to surrender.

One of the soldiers disarmed Ferara and pressed Ferara to the ground. Ferara cursed, “Seth, you dare treat me like this! Have you thought of the consequences?”

Rody coldly replied, “What nonsense are you talking about? Take him out and execute him!”

As the soldiers dragged Ferara out, Ferara cried, “I am a commander of the Empire! Even if you say I am guilty, you cannot kill me without orders from the Military Law Department!”

Rody sneered and replied, “This is an operation of the Northwest Legion! I am the Supreme Commander of this operation! According to the special regulations of the Empire’s operation, I have the right to put you to death! Execute him!”

Ferara screamed as he was dragged away by the soldiers. After a few moments, his voice could no longer be heard, and a fierce looking soldier came back. He threw a bloody head on the ground.

There were already a few corpses in front of the nobles. The bloody head rolled to the feet of one of the nobles. He gagged and fainted out of fear. There were also some who cried out in fear, as their legs went weak. If there hadn’t been someone one beside them to help them, they would have just fallen down.

“Everyone.” Rody’s face changed to calm expression as he addressed the nobles present and he lightly said, “Commander Ferara was a traitor. The evidence was irrefutable and he has already been executed by military law. I will immediately report this to the Military Law Department, but we have all witnessed to it. We are all loyal subjects of His Majesty, so I know that it would not be right for me to take all the credit.” With a wave of his hand, a soldier took out a prepared report and gave it to Rody.

“I would like to invite everyone to sign this report, which I will send to the Military Law Department.”

The nobles were stunned by his words...

‘Sign it together?’

They were all powerful families from the Northwest with connections to Ferara and Fedol. Naturally, they knew the background of the two men. But the duke had executed Ferara without even blinking. They feared that he would execute them as well. That being said, how could they sign the report so easily? If they signed the report, it meant that had they sided with the duke.

One way of saying it was that the duke could easily kill them off. Even Ferara's family who had a powerful background could not do anything. If the nobles signed their names, Ferara’s family would not be able to blame the duke, but that was definitely not the case for themselves.

Seeing everybody looking at each other, Rody smiled. He knew that they needed a trigger. He then spoke loudly, “Commander Fedol, do you have anything to say?!”

Fedol had already been kneeling on the ground. He was so frightened that he peed himself. Tears and snot kept running down his face as he continued to kowtow. “Your Excellency! Your Excellency, I did not commit treason!”

Rody lightly replied, “Then where did you get all these gold

coins?”

Fedol cried and said, “These gold coins were not given by Reuenthal!” He looked up to see the other nobles. Among them were some of his accomplices. Fedol was a bungling oaf. When Fedol looked at the nobles, he seemed to grasp the last straw and shouted, “These gold coins were really not given by Reuenthal! If you do not believe me, ask them! They all know the truth! They also have a share in these gold coins!”

The moment he spoke those words, Rody felt relieved.

‘I have been waiting for you to say this!’

Rody quickly gazed at the nobles. The nobles who were still hesitating were frightened. They cursed Fedol deep down in their hearts for dragging them down with him. They all stopped hesitating and started to scold Fedol. The area became noisy, and the nobles had indignant expressions.

“Fedol, you are a slanderer! You collaborated with Reuenthal and now you want to frame others?”

“Your Excellency, this traitor must not be allowed to live! You should execute him immediately!”

“Your Excellency is amazing for exposing the treachery of two officers!”

“Execute him! Uphold the Military Law of the Empire!”

Seeing everybody shouting, Fedol fainted out of fear.

Rody smiled and said, “This will be difficult. I have already killed one, and I want to leave one alive to interrogate him. This is an important matter. If I kill him now, the military law...”

Before Rody could finish, a noble shouted, “Your Excellency the Duke, Fedol is guilty of treason, and the evidence is irrefutable! He should immediately be executed! We have already seen it ourselves, and we are willing to testify for Your Excellency! We

will sign the report!”

With this noble taking the lead, the other nobles also responded similarly. These nobles were all accomplices of Fedol. They were afraid that the duke would arrest and interrogate Fedol. They knew that Fedol was a useless and timid person. If he was interrogated, he would immediately sell them out. As a result, the nobles had hoped for Rody to immediately execute Fedol. With one mouth less, they would be able to protect themselves.

Rody was pleased. He then laughed and ordered his soldiers to pass the report to the nobles, one at a time, for them to sign.

At that moment, there was chaos. There were some cunning nobles who tried to escape signing the report. They pretended to faint out of fear however, Rody’s soldiers did buy it and kicked them ferociously. The nobles felt the pain and jumped up. The soldiers showed the nobles their blood-stained sword to ensure that they signed the report obediently.

After a while, everyone, regardless of men or women, young or old, had signed the report prepared by Rody.

Rody took a look at the report and smiled with satisfaction. He then glanced coldly at Fedol and loudly ordered, “Pull him out and execute him!”

Rody did not dare to leave Fedol alive as well. He had executed both of them for treason, but the truth was they were actually corrupted and did not collaborate with the enemy. There would be trouble if Fedol was left alive and the incident was investigated in the future. By killing the two of them immediately, there would be no witnesses.

With the signatures of all the powerful noble families in the Northwest Region, the incident was considered settled. With all of their signatures, even if the two were not traitors, they were already considered so.

Rody smiled for a moment. Suddenly, his face sank as he looked at the people present. He slowly said, “Everyone in the Northwest! From now on, whatever you do, please be careful!”

After that, Rody ordered the soldiers to take away the boxes of gold coins. However, he deliberately left the corpses and blood on the floor.

All the way back, Rody sighed. With one move, he had punished the army’s two largest parasites. He had also used one of them to serve as a warning for the other nobles, using his blood to intimidate them. They would think twice the next time they wanted to embezzle money.

Even if Rody hated those people, he would soon need to leave the Northwest Region after all. Even if he wanted to stop the corruption entirely, it would not have been possible. He could only give them a warning and hoped that they would restrain themselves.

Rody had helped the next Regiment Commander get rid of two big pieces of trash and firmly warned the other corrupt nobles. He had already built a foundation. He hoped that his replacement would be capable enough to improve the situation.

When he returned to the garrison, Rody still felt gloomy. Muse’s departure and Reuben’s dismissal made his heart feel heavy. Although he had eradicated two parasites, there were definitely a lot more.

As he felt depressed, he ordered his soldiers to get him some wine.

Not long after that, he heard light footsteps. Turning around, he saw a pretty girl holding a leather flask as she entered the room.

“How come it’s you?” Rody gave a light smile.

Jadelina suddenly knelt down as she offered the leather flask containing the wine. Her voice trembled as she said, “Your

Excellency, I heard that you killed the Commander of Trier Fortress today... He was the one who had forced one of my brothers to go to the army... which resulted in my brother's death..." After that, Jadelina looked up and revealed her red eyes.

Rody nodded as he took the leather flask. "Let me ask you something. The other day, I executed 10 of your village men. Even though they had collaborated with the enemy, they were still people from your village. Do you hate me for it?"

Jadelina did not avoid eye contact and softly replied, "At first, I hated you for it. However, I later understood that if you did not execute them, the hearts of the soldiers would be scattered. If their hearts were scattered, more people in the Northwest region would die. That is why... I do not hate Your Excellency."

Rody sighed. He then nodded and gently said, "You actually understand. That is not easy." He pulled out the stopper from the leather flask and drank a mouthful of the wine. He almost choked from the bitter taste of the wine.

He was not someone who normally drank wine but he was depressed and suddenly felt like drinking. After coughing violently a few times, he noticed that Jadelina was still kneeling in front of him. His face then turned red as he lightly said, "Alright, you may leave now. I will be returning to the Imperial Capital in about two days. I will send you home along the way."

Jadelina stood up and walked towards the door. When she reached the door, she could not help but turn around and say, "Your Excellency, you have changed a lot the past few days... You are different from the time I met you in the village."

Rody smiled, but he did not say anything. He just waved his hand, signaling her to go.

Once he was alone in his room, Rody's smile gradually disappeared. He slowly sipped the wine and whispered to himself, "I have changed? I am still Rody, but I am no longer the soft

hearted, silly boy. Dandong was right. Blood can make people grow...”

Chapter 93: The Westwood Capital City

A few days later, the newly-appointed Regiment Commander of the Northwest Legion, Elliott, arrived with 1,000 cavalrymen. Rody handed over the military affairs to him. Then Rody led the Central Cavalry, along with Gordon and the Imperial Guards, back to the Imperial Capital.

Regiment Commander Elliott was an old and wise person. According to Sieg, when Elliot was a Deputy Commander of the Central Cavalry, he was not corrupted. However, he was not outstanding. He did not offend anyone or made dealings with anyone. He was not greedy for money, had no desire for women and did not like having power.

Rody sighed. The Northwest Region needed a person who was resolute and vigorous in executing policies. This was to ensure that all of the corruption could be rooted out. Elliot did not seem to be such a person.

However, Elliot was said to be very familiar with military affairs. Currently, the Emperor did not want to fight in a war. Reuenthal was also not able to fight in a war as the two princes of Great Moon Kingdom were having an internal strife for power and authority. Elliot came to defend the Northwest region of the Empire, and there would not be any problems as long as Elliot did not make mistakes.

The only thing that annoyed Rody was that Jojo would be following him back to the Imperial Capital. Jojo had ignored him a few days ago in Watt Fortress. However, on the way back, Jojo had returned to her usual self and began to approach Rody again.

The situation when they returned to the Imperial Capital was different. Regiment Commander Elliott had mentioned that the Empire and Great Moon Kingdom had already dispatched an envoy to meet each other for peace negotiations. Both parties had also

held back their armies. Besides, the Great Moon Kingdom had sent one of their Princes to Empire's capital as a show of sincerity. Due to this, everybody was more relaxed on the journey back compared to the last time when the army had to rapidly march day and night.

Jojo had dispatched her bodyguards twice to invite Rody to board her carriage. With a flushed face, the terrified Rody told his bodyguards to refuse Jojo's invitation. He gave the excuse that a high-ranking military officer should not leave without permission when the army was marching.

Jojo was filled with hate but she was miserably in love with Seth. When the threatening black robed woman left, her heart was at peace. Jojo believed that it would not be difficult to recapture her lover's heart with her status and beauty. After half a day went by, Jojo was unable to hold back any longer. She told her bodyguard to bring her a horse, and then she left the carriage. She rushed to Rody's side and rode beside him.

In the military, a person without fixed duties was not allowed to approach high-ranking military officers so easily. But Miss Jojo's status made her different compared to others. She was Her Highness the Empress's sister and was a special envoy sent by Emperor. She also seemed to have an undetermined relationship with the duke. Which idiot was brave enough to stop her? Even Gordon immediately kept his distance, and Sieg also gave an excuse to escape to another side.

Fortunately, they were surrounded by people during the march and Jojo did not dare mention any private matters. She simply just asked what happened in the Northwest region. Rody was helpless and could only cope by responding with a few sentences. When he talked about the more thrilling moments, Jojo was afraid. She turned deathly pale as she comforted herself by patting her chest repeatedly. She then gazed at Rody gently. When she thought of her lover who went through a life and death situation in the Northwest region, she was distressed, but she also felt happy.

Soon, it was noon and Jojo started to sweat. Rody could not bear to see the sweet and lovely Jojo exposed under the sunlight as she followed them. Rody then gently advised her return to the carriage. Jojo felt happy when she saw Rody finally caring for her and obediently returned to the carriage.

Previously, when Rody went on the expedition, he and the army had marched rapidly and used narrow paths. As a result, they had arrived at Watt Fortress within three days. This time, they only covered half the distance after traveling for five days.

They gradually entered deeper into the Empire's territory and further away from the war zone in the Northwest region. The surrounding villages and towns were peaceful and serene. It did not have the vast, chaotic and ruined scenery in the Northwest region. Rody sighed and thought to himself.

If Watt fortress did not block Reuenthal's army in the Northwest, could these people enjoy peace?

On the sixth day of the journey, they arrived at Westwood province. After another five days, they would be out of the Westwood province and arrive at the Imperial Capital. They had a safe and pleasant journey. Everyone was feeling relaxed. During the war in the Northwest region, the Central Cavalry had accomplished their mission remarkably. It was considered as a victorious battle and everyone would be granted a reward when they returned to the Imperial Capital. As a result, everyone was at ease.

However, only Rody did not look calm, and he was unhappy. Along the way, he had never turned around to look north. However, he constantly thought of the black robed woman. He knew that the further north he traveled, the further away he would be from the south.

They arrived in the capital city of the Westwood province, West Hill City, that evening. Rody commanded the army to station and

rest outside the city. The local officers of West Hill City had requested to visit Rody, but Rody ordered his subordinates to refuse.

During the journey, they had passed by a few cities and towns. Most of the local officers knew that the Empire's Duke of Tulip was returning triumphantly so, they were trying to curry favor. They constantly had banquets, and even the local aristocrats were sticking around like flies. Rody had tried to cope with it for two days, but after that, he could not stand it anymore. However, they were not stingy with the food and drinks. The military officers distributed them to the rest of the army.

The soldiers were all happy. They felt that if they followed the duke, they would be able to win battles and have an unlimited amount of meat and wine. They wished to return to the Empire's capital as soon as possible so that the duke could be promoted as the Commander-in-chief of the Central Cavalry.

The soldiers had driven away the local officers. Rody had just sat down when Jojo came to him and earnestly asked him to visit the city with her. Although they had passed by a few cities and towns, the West Hill City was the largest city in the Westwood province. It was also the largest city in the northern area of the Empire.

Rody was very annoyed by Jojo. He ordered a few bodyguards to put on civilian clothing, and he walked out of the military camp with Jojo.

The West Hill City was definitely the largest city of the North. Even though there was a war in the Northwest region, the city was still peaceful. The city streets were bustling with a lot of merchants from the North and the South. Even in the evening, the businesses were still booming, and there were a lot of pedestrians on the streets. It looked peaceful, with the exception of a group of public security soldiers who walked around the city. They were heavily armed which caused some nervous tension.

Rody walked together with Jojo. Jojo happily looked around the city excitedly, but Rody was not interested at all. Finally, Rody took Jojo to a restaurant by the roadside to rest.

After ordering the food, Rody relaxed, only to hear the guests around him talk about the war in the Northwest region. There were numerous victorious battle stories: The Duke of the Tulip Family took to the field and gave Reuenthal a crushing defeat. The Great Moon Kingdom had suffered heavy losses and Reuenthal was terrified.

Some people even said that the duke's army had assumed battle formation and fought against Reuenthal for one day and one night. They said that the duke utilized the Tulip Family's unique skill, "The Nine Heaven Ten Buddha Head Shaking Dreadful Golden Lightning Slash" in the end. The duke had allegedly severed the head of Reuenthal's horse with his sword. After Reuenthal fell off his horse, he kowtowed and admitted his defeat. After that, he took his army of 100,000 barbarians back to the grasslands.

Rody almost spat when he heard the rumors. He felt that the rumors were ridiculously funny. Rody did not consider the war at the Northwest region to be a victory. On top of that, Reuenthal was absolutely not defeated. This happened because Rody had successfully raided Reuenthal's army and disturbed the opponent's inner territories. This had disrupted Reuenthal's plans and forced him to withdraw to fight in his homeland.

Based on Reuenthal's ability, he would absolutely renew his power and authority. As long as he crushed the opposition in the inner region, he would become king in the future and resume his attack. A big war would be inevitable.

Jojo did not really care about the rumors, but she was very happy when she heard people complimenting her lover. However, she also felt some of the statements were ridiculous and interesting. For example, one said that he was very tall and could cut through a mountain with his sword. His fierce roar could make tens of

thousands of enemies retreat in fear. Jojo couldn't help but laugh when the rumors became more and more outrageous.

Jojo had laughed a little too loudly and sounded like she was making fun of the duke. The people who were chatting immediately heard her laughter and turned their heads to glare at her. With one look, they saw a sweet and charming girl smiling as she looked at them. Next to her was a handsome and heroic young man who was creasing his brows. After seeing the two of them, they no longer expressed their anger. The girl was also surrounded by a few strong men who seemed to be protecting her. As a result, the people were afraid to walk up to her and strike a conversation.

One of them coughed gently and could not fight the urge to say, "Little Miss, looking at your appearance, you must be someone with status. We were talking about the heroic exploits of the respectable Duke of the Tulip Family. What are you laughing at?"

Jojo looked sideways and replied, "Nothing. I just heard all of you exaggerating and wondered if the Duke of the Tulip Family is really that incredible? I do not think so!"

After listening to what Jojo had said, the person's expression turned sour. Even if she was a beautiful woman, he did not care and loudly said, "His Excellency is the God of the Empire's Army! Naturally, he is like a god! You are just a child, what do you know!"

A few people beside him also became angry and resentful. Others looked lustfully at Jojo while the older ones all glared at her.

Jojo could care less about them. She smiled and replied, "You all always say that he is extremely powerful, but have you all actually seen him in person?"

The person who told the tale of the duke's battle with Reuenthal turned red immediately and mumbled, "Although I have not seen him in person, everybody has been saying the same thing. It is most likely true."

“Hmph, rumors are not necessarily true. From what I see, the Duke of Tulip Family is not as incredible as you say! Hehe, he is probably a flirty and flippant person!” Jojo said as she looked at Rody.

She must be an important person! She has the guts to criticize the Empire's patron saint. If you weren't a noble we would have already taught you a lesson.

Another person said, “Little girl, you are not being sensible! Without the duke to guard us against the attack from the Northwest, how could we even enjoy such peaceful days?”

There were also other people with bad intentions who shouted, “Catch the little girl and make her admit her mistake!”

Seeing that a few guests had finished their drinks and were walking towards Jojo as they rolled up their sleeves, Rody frowned and said to Jojo, “Don't say anymore.” He then pulled Jojo and walked out of the restaurant. The drunkards tried to stop them but could not possibly stop Rody's Wolf Fang.

When they reached the street, Jojo asked, “Seth, are you angry that I said you were flirty and flippant?”

Rody shook his head, feeling helpless and said no.

Jojo sighed, “I preferred it when you were a flirty and flippant person. Not like now. You are so silent and strict! You are starting to look more like your father.”

Rody gave a wry smile but did not have a good reply. He walked forward but since they were holding hands when Rody brought Jojo out of the restaurant, Jojo was unwilling to let go.

The royal bodyguards behind them smiled oddly as they felt that the duke was powerful on the battlefield, but he became helpless when dealing with Miss Jojo.

After a few steps, they arrived in front of a public square. Even though it was night, there were lights shining brightly above the

public square. The square was very crowded and seemed to be lively.

Jojo was curious and pulled Rody towards the public square.

They saw a small platform built at the edge of the square. On the platform was a man wearing a brocade robe. The man was shouting. There were also two muscular and shirtless men behind him. Both of them looked fierce and each held a whip.

Rody's ferocious Wolf Fang bodyguards pushed the crowds aside so that Rody and Jojo could stand nearer to the stage.

The people around them were dissatisfied with Rody and Jojo's behavior but when they saw his aggressive bodyguards, they dared not speak or complain.

The robed man on the stage realized that enough crowd had gathered. He immediately turned his head and nodded towards the two muscular men. The two men walked to the back of the stage and drew back the big piece of curtain. The curtain gradually parted and revealed about seven to eight young children of both genders. They looked depressed and afraid.

Rody sighed and realized that they were trafficking child slaves.

Slavery had always existed in the Radiant Empire. It had existed since the era of Abbas the Great. He went on an expedition in all directions and defeated all of his enemies. After the war, there would always be prisoners. He felt that killing them would be a waste but he could not set them free. Thus, they were turned into slaves. Although Dandong had proposed the abolition of slavery, this system had brought many benefits to the Empire. As such, Abbas rejected Dandong's request.

It had been 200 years since then, but there were still wars occurring at the borders of the Empire from time to time. The Great Moon Kingdom was located in the West, the Roland Continent was located in the North, and there were also some

tribal groups in the South. Besides, selling the slaves actually helped increase the Empire's revenue. Thus, the previous emperors had never abolished this cruel and inhumane system.

Rody hated to see it, but it was not something he could control. He frowned and pulled Jojo away. However, that was the first time Jojo saw the trafficking of slaves. She had never left the Imperial Capital. Even though there were also slave traders in the Imperial Capital and slaves in her own home, she was a noble and had never seen an actual scene of slave trafficking.

She saw a few pitiful-looking young children. Jojo felt great sympathy for them and was unwilling to leave.

Chapter 94: Provocation

The slave trader noticed the crowd getting bigger. He did not immediately sell the child slaves. Instead, he told his two brawny subordinates to push a huge iron cage up to the platform. Inside the cage were several muscular young men. Some of them were dark skinned, some were light-skinned, some were tall and some were short. The dark-skinned slaves were mostly barbarians from the Southern mountains while the light-skinned slaves were mostly natives of the Empire. Most of them were convicts who were bought out of prison by the slave traders as slaves.

“These strong fellows-buy them for work! One can do two... no, three persons’ worth of work! Look at their bodies! Look at their muscles! Feeding them two simple meals a day is enough! Five gold coins! Five gold coins for each slave! What? Expensive? It is not expensive! I do honest business! How about this? If you buy an adult slave, I will give you a free child slave! Buy one, get one free!”

The slave trader’s spit flew in all directions as he spoke. After that, he signaled his two brawny subordinates with his eyes. His subordinates understood the signal and used their whips to threaten the slaves in the cage. The slaves were frightened by the whip and stood up one after another. A few of the dark-skinned slaves were very angry and glared at the two subordinates.

“Look at this face! Look!” The slave trader shouted even louder. There were a few people, dressed in magnificent clothes, who stood below the platform. They continuously instructed their subordinates and servants to bid for the slaves.

“Why do these slaves look dispirited and weak?” Jojo could not help but ask.

Rody coldly replied, “If a person does have enough to eat for days, of course they would look dispirited! These people are young and strong. If they had eaten enough, they would be full of energy.

I am afraid some of them might fight back and run away.”

Jojo sighed and felt discomfort in her heart. Although she had a few slaves in her home, she had never understood their suffering. The moment she saw those pitiful people, a trace of compassion formed in her heart.

The young and strong slaves were very popular. In a short period, the slaves were all sold out. That slave trader was very happy as he held the money. The slaves were sent to the back of the platform to be collected by their buyers.

When the cage on the platform was emptied, the slave trader's subordinates slowly pushed the cage down from the platform.

The slave trader walked in front of a row of children. He pinched one of the little girls' soft and lovely cheeks and shouted, “Take a look at her! Quick, take a look at her! What a fair and cute child! Although she is still young, if you buy her and raise her for three to five years, she will become a beauty! Masters, buy one back. She will become a delicate beauty! Ten golds! Just ten golds!”

The little girl was about eleven or twelve years old. She was so frightened that she turned pale and her eyes were full of tears. However, she saw the brawny subordinate holding a whip next to her and did not dare to cry out.

Below the platform, a fat man dressed in a gorgeous leather gown shouted, “Ten gold coins? That is too expensive! It was just five gold coins for an adult!”

The slave trader smiled happily and said, “Master, I am always reasonable when it comes to business! Ten golds to buy the little girl and I will give you a little boy free of charge. How about that?”

The buyers below the platform whispered to one another.

Someone immediately shouted, “What is the use of the little boy? He is too young and will not be able to work for us! If I bought him back, I would need to raise him for another few years before he

becomes a laborer!”

In the slave trading business, middle-aged pretty ladies and strong men were the most popular among all. Other than that, young pretty little girls were also quite popular. However, nobody was willing to buy young little boys.

Nevertheless, the slave trader was very smart. He smiled and said, “Masters, look at these little children. I carefully selected each and every one of them. They are all smart and refined little boys. Buy them and guide them a bit. They will become clever and charming servants. Definitely worth it! On top of that, I am giving them to you free of charge! Masters, please think about it. With ten gold coins, you can buy a little beauty and get a smart little boy for free. It is absolutely a good bargain!”

The slave trader saw that audience still hesitated. He bit his lip and painfully shouted, “How about this? Eight gold coins! Eight gold coins! Buy a little girl and get a little boy for free!”

As he spoke, he pinched the little girl’s cheeks.

They saw that the little girl on the platform was really delicate and pretty. In a short period of time, a few well-dressed buyers were tempted. A few of them were actually involved in the prostitution business. They planned to buy the little girl, train her for a while and get her to start accepting customers.

Rody felt gloomy and angry. He was born as an ordinary citizen and he knew that some of the slaves were people brought back from pillaged villages at the borders. There were also some who were poor local citizens. They were forced to sell their children to survive.

However, slavery was legal in the Empire. It had been like this for 200 years. Although Rody felt that it was unfair, he was helpless.

Jojo felt extremely anxious in her heart as she had the intention

of buying all the little girls and desperately pulled at Rody's clothes. However, Rody was gloomy and silent. She could not hold back any longer and shouted, "Eight golds each! I want them all!"

While the audience still hesitated, Jojo had shouted and caused an uproar. The slave trader was attracted by Jojo's words. He immediately looked at her and smiled as he said, "Miss, you have good judgment!"

Before the slave trader could finish speaking, some of the people had already quit. The other buyers were stirred up and did not want to let Jojo buy the little girls first. They were reluctant to let all the good stuff in front of them be bought by someone else and loudly protested.

A sharp and grating voice sounded out from the audience, "Miss, aren't you being unreasonable? There are so many people here and yet you want to buy them all alone?"

A few muscular young men separated the audience. They surrounded and guarded a pale and thin well dressed middle-aged man through the crowd. The middle-aged man walked towards Rody and Jojo.

The others who saw the middle-aged man immediately shut up. Some of them were pushed away by his subordinates. Although they were unwilling, they immediately kept quiet and moved out of the way.

"Whatever I buy is my business. It has nothing to do with you! Who are you? How dare you control me?" Jojo's face sank.

When the middle-aged man walked to the front, he saw a very charming young lady standing in front of him. His eyes turned bright and his originally gloomy expression became happy. He almost started to drool as he sighed.

'She is such an extraordinary beauty! She is much prettier compared to the prostitutes at home! '

He then looked at Jojo and laughed. “Miss, what are you trying to do buying so many girls? How about you let me buy them and we can become friends? How should I address you? You want to buy all these little girls, does that mean you also own a brothel? In that case, we are a family! How about it? Where is your brothel? I will visit next time!”

Jojo was angry and her face turned red. With her noble status, she was not going to bear such insults. Before she could speak, Rody coldly said, “Get lost!”

The person’s face sank. He was willing to give way when talking to Jojo. But when he talked to a man, he did not look pleasant. He was the most prestigious person in the local area. Before he could even speak, his subordinates had already shouted, “Who do you think you are? You dare speak to Master Trey like that?” Some of them pulled out their swords and waited for their master to give them the order.

Rody’s bodyguards had also pulled out their swords long before. Both parties glared at each other in the tense atmosphere.

Rody frowned. He did not want to cause any trouble. He was disgusted by slavery. That was also why he did not have any intention of buying slaves. He coldly glanced at the middle-aged man, pulled Jojo away and decided to leave.

However, Master Trey waved his hand, and his subordinates blocked them from leaving. Master Trey then looked all over Jojo’s body and suddenly laughed. “Great, you have some courage! It has been a while since I met anybody in West Hill City who had the courage to talk back to me like that! Boy, you are brave! Let me tell you, I want all these people today! I want the little beauties and also that big beauty! If you understand what I mean, you better move out of the way quickly! Otherwise, I will throw you into the city river and feed you to the fishes!”

Rody immediately stopped. Initially, he was unwilling to fight for

pointless things like slaves. However, the middle-aged man had angered him and was asking to be killed. Rody had killed a lot of people in the Northwest and was no longer a meek person.

Trey could feel the brave and heroic young man coldly glare at him. Rody's gaze sent a chill down his spine. However, Trey noticed that his subordinates outnumbered his opponent's so, he had more courage. However, the slave trader was sweating and feeling anxious. He was just doing business but their subordinates had already pulled out their swords. He dared not offend either one of them and shouted, "Masters, please calm down! It is just a few slaves! I still have a lot more! Don't be angry! You do not need to fight!" Unfortunately, everyone ignored him. Trey once again looked at Jojo. The longer he looked, the harder it was for him to breath. His eyes showed an ominous glint. He realized that he had more subordinates so he decided to kill Rody and his subordinates to get the beauty.

They looked unfamiliar. Trey believed that they were not locals. Plus, they did not look like ordinary citizens as well. However, based on his own power and influence in the West Hill City, he believed that the young man and woman would not be able to do much.

Trey gave an eye signal to his subordinates. A dozen of his subordinates immediately surrounded the other party. The crowd saw them revealing their swords and immediately moved far away.

Rody coldly asked, "What do you want?"

"What do I want?" Trey laughed and thought Rody was frightened. He shouted loudly, "Be a good boy and leave that young lady. Then I won't make things difficult for you!"

Jojo didn't wait for Rody to speak and laughed as she replied, "You talk as though you are a notable person. Does the entire West Hill City belong to you?"

Trey laughed and said, "Close enough. Young lady, you better be

obedient and follow me back!”

Jojo looked to the side and pulled Rody’s clothes to prevent him from speaking. She then smiled and said, “You want me to go with you? I’m afraid my family will not consent.”

“They will not consent?” Trey smiled happily and said, “Where is your family? I will send my subordinates to talk to them. They will not disagree!” Trey almost lost himself when he saw Jojo’s smile.

Jojo deliberately sighed and replied, “My parents have passed away but my sister will definitely not agree to let me go with you!”

Trey’s eyes turned bright and said, “You have a sister? You are so beautiful. Your sister must be a beauty as well! How about this, I will send my people and bring your sister over so that both of you can go back with me!”

Jojo stopped smiling and said, “Well, if you humiliate me, at most, you will be arrested and thrown into prison for a few years. However, if you insult my sister, you are asking for death...”

Chapter 95: Rebellion

Rody frowned. Initially, he just wanted to teach the other guy a lesson and forget about it. However, Trey had tried to humiliate Jojo's sister. It meant death for him. Jojo's sister was Her Highness, the Empress. To disgrace the Royal Family could only mean death.

Trey laughed coldly and said, "Do not speak nonsense! Get them!"

A dozen of Trey's subordinates swarmed their opponents. The eight Wolf Fang soldiers moved up and stopped them. There was the sound of swords clashing followed by a few screams of agony as two of Trey's subordinates dropped dead.

Rody's subordinates were all bloodthirsty warriors who had fought in the Northwest region. When they fought, they showed no mercy. They did not even blink when they killed. Although Trey had more subordinates, after losing two of his men, the others were afraid to step forward. Trey was furious. He was the tyrant of West Hill City and had never met anyone who dared to oppose him. He promised his subordinates a large reward, and they once again rushed forward.

Rody squinted his eyes as he stood at Jojo's side to protect her. He did not fight at all. However, there were two people who thought of taking advantage of the situation. They tried to attempt a sneak attack on him and Jojo. With a kick, Rody sent them flying.

The screams continued as blood flew all over the place. Most of Trey's subordinates were dead and only about three of them remained. On the other hand, Rody's subordinates only received light injuries. The scimitars in their hands were stained with blood and they looked murderously at Trey.

Trey was so frightened that he knelt down. One of the Wolf Fang

soldier went up and dragged Trey up to Rody. Trey's whole body was weak as he laid on the ground, trembling.

Suddenly, there was the sound of a whistle and a group of public security soldiers separated the crowd and rushed in.

Trey was relieved and his face once again lit up. "Boy, this time, you are dead!" He then raised his head and shouted to the public security soldiers, "You fools! Quickly, come and save me!"

The captain saw that Trey was captured and waved his hands to call his men. He held a sword in his hand and moved towards Rody.

Rody was stern and he shouted, "Get lost!" Rody had commanded thousands of soldiers before and his voice was imposing. The captain was surprised and stopped. He was afraid to move forward.

"You are all public security! How can you indiscriminately arrest people?" Rody's face was serious.

The captain's face turned red as he shouted, "Nonsense! You carried weapons on the street and murdered people! That is a capital offense!"

Jojo laughed happily. "His subordinates carried weapons too! Isn't that a capital offense as well? The laws of the Empire state that other than soldiers and warriors, others are not allowed to carry weapons! If you want to talk about murder, they were the ones who attacked first. Why aren't you catching them?"

The captain's face sank as he replied, "Nonsense! You dare offend Master Trey! You are asking for death! Arrest them!" The public security soldiers all pulled out their swords and surrounded them.

They were not like Trey's unruly subordinates. They were public security soldiers and were well trained. With overwhelming numbers, they surrounded Rody and his group of people.

Rody frowned. "Is this how the West Hill City's public security does things? Is this how your garrison commander controls you?"

Jojo felt odd and looked at Rody.

The captain ferociously replied, “From the way you talk, you must be a country bumpkin! The West Hill City is the capital of the Westwood province! The whole of Westwood does not have any garrison. How could there be a garrison commander? We, the public security soldiers, obey the instructions of the assistant governor! Mister Trey is the younger brother of the assistant governor. If you want to live, put down your weapons obediently and release Mister Trey!”

Rody snorted. He looked at Trey, who was at his feet and lightly asked, “You are the younger brother of the assistant governor?”

Trey thought that Rody was afraid and loudly shouted, “That’s right! Quickly release me! Otherwise, don’t think you can leave West Hill City alive!” He tried to get up only to get kicked down by a Wolf Fang soldier.

Rody coldly replied, “Even the assistant governor should not hide the truth! West Hill City is the capital city of Westwood province. How could the governor here allow you to commit such an atrocity?”

The captain became impatient and shouted loudly, “West Hill City does not have a governor! Quickly release Mister Trey!”

Jojo secretly pulled Rody aside and quietly asked, “Seth, do you really not know or are you pretending not to know to play tricks on them? When was there a governor in Westwood province? Don’t they all answer to you?”

“They answer to me?” Rody was stunned.

Even though they were surrounded by the public security soldiers, Jojo was relaxed. She pulled Rody’s hands and smiled. “Just now, I said that you have changed, but now, you are being crafty again! The entire Westwood province is the Tulip Family’s territory. You, as the Duke of the Tulip Family, will certainly have

the final say! If the Westwood province belongs to the Tulip Family, how can there be a governor? The taxes of the Westwood province all go to the Tulip Family! The public security, the assistant governor and all the officials here are paid by the Tulip Family. In a way, these people are all your subordinates.”

The moment Rody heard this, his expression became weird. He did not know whether to laugh or to cry.

This is actually the Tulip Family’s territory.

When Rody became an impostor, he might have been told about such matters. However, he did not really understand it then. Even though someone told him about it occasionally, he would immediately forget.

Seeing Rody’s strange expression, the captain could wait no longer. His men all intimidated Rody as they waved their swords and slowly advanced. The captain was sweating profusely. If anything happened to Trey, he would definitely lose his job and maybe even his life.

Jojo laughed and said, “How is it? My dear duke, isn’t mingling with the people incognito really interesting?”

Rody shook his head. Just as he was about to open his mouth to tell the other party his identity, there was an uproar among the crowd standing at a distance. Suddenly, someone shouted loudly, “His Excellency, the Assistant Governor, has arrived!”

Hundreds of soldiers surrounded the public square with the crowd in the middle. A group of local soldiers holding lances separated the crowd and entered the middle. A team of cavalymen then opened the way. They were followed by a man on a black horse. It was a middle-aged man in an Imperial Officer’s uniform. His appearance was also similar to Trey.

Jojo curled her lips and softly whispered, “He is merely an assistant governor but he has so many soldiers accompanying him.

Such arrogance! Even the military minister in the Imperial Capital doesn't have that many soldiers."

The man shouted angrily, "Who dares to capture my brother? Are you all good for nothing?"

The soldiers gave way for the man to go in front. His face was full of anger until he saw Rody. His arrogant expression turned pale and his forehead started to sweat. He quickly got down his horse and ran towards Rody. He then knelt in front of Rody and spoke with a trembling voice, "Your Excellency the Duke! This subordinate of yours did not know that you were here! Your subordinate should be punished!"

Rody was startled for a moment, "You know me?"

The assistant governor smiled and replied, "I met Your Excellency the Duke and Miss Nicole at the Imperial Capital last year! Have you forgotten?"

After replying Rody, the assistant governor stood up and turned around before shouting. "Quickly, put away your weapons! Do not be rude to the duke! Do you want to die?"

Rody laughed coldly. "Rude? Your brother had been very rude much earlier!"

That assistant governor sweated profusely. He saw his brother on the ground. He went up to him and cruelly kicked him as he cursed, "Idiot, you actually dared to offend His Excellency the Duke! Quickly get up and beg His Excellency for mercy!"

Trey almost fainted but managed to get up and kowtowed as he trembled. However, Jojo coldly said, "Begging for mercy is not enough. He humiliated me and my sister. He is definitely not going to escape execution. I look at you, and you do not look like a good person! Your brother here was so arrogant. This must also be because of your support!"

The assistant governor turned pale. His eyes gave off an ominous

glint. He did not know Jojo's identity but thought that she was the duke's lover.

The duke, with his status, scolding me is enough. How dare a little girl like you scold me as well?

Rody was aware of the other party's expression and sneered. "I will take your brother away. You stay back to disperse the crowd and go to the military camp outside the city to admit your guilt!"

Trey was so scared that he could barely move his body. He could only cry out, "Brother, save me!" After that, his eyes rolled up and he fainted.

The assistant governor's heart trembled. He knew that the duke had already been offended in the incident and was afraid that he could not save his post. He had also committed a lot of evil acts in the West Hill City. Acts that would be enough to cause him to be beheaded at least a dozen times. If the duke found out, he would definitely be dead. In addition, even if his brother was not a good person, how could he just watch his own brother, whom he grew up with, die? His brother knew too much and he was being taken away. In case his brother accidentally let anything slip, he would be doomed!

He looked around at the other party and only saw eight guards. Even if they were powerful, they were outnumbered by his own hundreds of subordinates.

Although the public square had a lot of ordinary citizens, the outside of the square was guarded by his trusted subordinates. The several hundred soldiers with him, were all paid by him. He thought he might as well just go all out to get rid of the duke! Moreover, the duke had also secretly entered the city. Although there were hundreds of ordinary citizens, the assistant governor planned to kill them all and leave no witnesses. After that, he would concoct a story about how the duke got killed by robbers. Then, he would take a few prisoners from the prison as scapegoats

to execute. In the West Hill City, he was the most powerful. Even, if the higher authorities sent people over to investigate, no one would dare to say much with him in charge. As such, there would be no case.

Even if the emperor finally pursued the case, there would be no evidence and witnesses. At most, it would be a crime of negligence. The duke had himself to blame because he secretly sneaked out unguarded. If that was insufficient, he could also turn one of the public security soldiers into a scapegoat.

Thinking of that, his eyes turned merciless. He slowly stood up and stepped a few steps back before saying, "Your Excellency the Duke, my brother offended you but it is not a death sentence. Just beat him up and forget about it."

Jojo shouted back, "Nonsense! Who do you think you are? You dare plead mercy for him?"

At this point, it was time to stop giving face to the other party. Rody's subordinates wanted to drag Trey away. The assistant governor observed with a hesitant face and finally gritted his teeth. He decided that fighting was better than waiting for his death. Waving his hand, he ordered his subordinates to block Rody's way.

Rody turned cold. He turned and looked at the assistant governor. He asked, "What are you trying to do?"

The assistant governor secretly ordered his trusted subordinate next to him to leave the public square. He was to order the subordinates outside the public square to seal all the entrances of the public square. After that, nobody would be allowed to leave the public square alive.

The assistant governor looked at Rody and said, "Your Excellency the Duke, you forced me to do this! I did not want to do this! As the saying goes, you should always leave a way out for your opponents! You did not give me a way out so I am forced to do this! Hmph!"

He signaled with his eyes and his cavalrymen started to approach Rody. They pointed their lances at Rody and those with him.

Rody frowned and loudly shouted, “I am the Duke of the Tulip Family! You dare raise your hand against me! Are you not afraid of being guilty of rebelling?”

The soldiers were startled and hesitated for a moment. After that, they heard the assistant governor shout back, “Do not speak nonsense! Kill this kid! Leave no survivors! If they escape, we will all be dead!”

The assistant governor then shouted louder, “Brothers, today we will kill this kid! We must not leave a single one alive! After that, everyone will be safe! Everyone will also be rewarded with 100 gold coins!”

A few of his trusted subordinates quickly gave the orders. The soldiers were all the assistant governor’s bodyguards. They did not have any governor in the Westwood province . The Tulip Family also usually never bothered about the place. The local army were all under the command of the assistant governor. Although he faced a deficit in paying their salary, it was better than leaving the local garrison in chaos. However, he made hundreds of those soldiers his own private soldiers. Although they wore the uniform of the Imperial Army, they only listened to the assistant governor. They had followed the overlord and had gotten used to his domineering ways. They were like his private army. When they heard that they would be rewarded, they stopped hesitating and started to advance. Others who were still hesitating also moved forward when they saw the majority doing so.

Seeing that the other side had surrounded him aggressively, Rody’s heart tensed.

The eight Wolf Fang soldiers were also discouraged. Although they were brave, they still felt nervous when they faced hundreds of opponents. They felt that their deaths would not be very

important. However, if the duke was harmed, the Wolf Fang pride would be tarnished.

The eight soldiers pulled out their scimitars but were forced by their opponents to step back.

At a distance, there were also soldiers who took out their weapons and surrounded the crowd of ordinary citizens. The citizens were frightened and they thought of running away. However, they were defenseless when they saw the gleaming swords in front of them. They were not brave enough to resist.

Rody took out his scimitar and told his subordinates. “Right after this, I want you to protect Miss Jojo! When you find the chance, run back to the military camp!” Jojo looked fearful, but she was moved when she saw Rody’s resolute face as he stood in front to protect her. She thought to herself:

Even if I died here today, I would die together with him. It’s worth it!

Chapter 96: Stench of Blood in the Setting Sun

“Kill!” The assistant governor shouted as he hid behind his bodyguards.

After that, the soldiers all rushed to clash with Rody’s group. Rody cut down a soldier as he kicked another one away. He shouted, “Rush out!”

The public square ended up in chaos. The ordinary citizens saw a fight had started. They were afraid and were running all over. However, some of them were immediately killed by the subordinates of the assistant governor. Some of the ordinary citizens were from a wealthy background. They brought along their servants who also fought with the soldiers.

Some of the citizens tried to run out of the public square but their paths were blocked by the soldiers. As they were unarmed, they were immediately killed by the soldiers.

Rody and the eight Wolf Fang soldiers were already covered in blood. They tenaciously protected Jojo as they tried to rush out of the public square. However, their opponents prevented them from escaping.

Rody, along with his soldiers had already been surrounded by dozens of enemy soldiers and could not advance through the layers of encirclement. He then heard Jojo's scream. One of Rody’s Wolf Fang soldiers had been killed by the enemy. While Rody was distracted, one of the soldiers managed to slash him.

Rody moved as he fought. He continued to swing his sword and prevented others from getting close to him. From time to time, he heard a tragic scream and his heart was filled with anger. He glared and rushed angrily towards the assistant governor.

Suddenly, he heard the neighing of a horse as his opponent

charged at him from one side. Rody could not block it in time and was knocked several meters away. As he laid down on the ground, he darted his scimitar at the cavalryman. The cavalryman gave cried in agony and fell down from the horse. Rody then jumped on the horse, bent down and pulled out his scimitar from the soldier's corpse.

From the corner of his eyes, Rody saw his subordinates struggling by Jojo's side. Out of eight of them, only four remained. Those who remained were covered in blood. One of them had injured his legs. That moment, a soldier tried to slash him. Rody's subordinate could not dodge in time and injured his shoulder. That Wolf Fang soldier then gathered his courage and roared. He rushed forward and was stabbed several times but he still managed to sever the head of an opponent.

Rody whipped the horse and charged forward. He knocked down all the soldiers who tried to block him. Rody did not care about several other cavalymen who were rushing towards him from both sides. He rushed to Jojo's side and helped her onto the horse as he got off. After that, he shouted, "Protect the horse! We will rush out!"

Fortunately, the other side did not have many cavalymen. Otherwise, they would not have been able to defend themselves from a cavalry charge. The public square was filled with the shouts and cries of the people and horses. Rody and his subordinates formed a circular formation. They continued to resist. Although their opponents had more people, their opponents were not elites and could not compete with the Wolf Fang soldiers. On top of that, Rody had abnormal strength. Although Rody's group had only a few people, their opponents were cautious in going up to fight them..

The public square was filled with the stench of blood. Most of the citizens were already dead. The other rebel soldiers mostly moved towards Rody's group. After a little more of the fierce fighting,

another Wolf Fang soldier met his demise.

Rody was extremely frustrated. His subordinates had followed him to fight fiercely in the Northwest battle and even raided the grasslands. They were all brave and strong warriors. However, they did not die in the Northwest battlefield instead, they were killed by rebel soldiers.

Rody's body suddenly emitted a faint golden fighting energy. He swung his shiny scimitar and a blade of light appeared. A sharp wind materialized and cut the rebel soldiers who were blocking the way into two.

Rody did not stop swinging his scimitar. A dozen soldiers felt the dazzling light of the scimitar before they felt their bodies being torn apart.

Rody had just used two Half Moon Slashes. His fighting energy was exhausted, and his face was pale. He saw his opponents retreat in confusion and fear, but he also felt weak. The scimitar in his hands felt extremely heavy and he almost could not lift it up. The assistant governor became furious and growled., "Kill him! Quickly, kill him!"

Suddenly, there was an uproar coming from the north of the public square. The sound of trampling hooves were heard. As the sound came closer, a loud voice could be heard. "Your Excellency the Duke! Your Excellency the Duke!" The voice belonged to Commander Gordon.

Rody shouted back, "Commander Gordon, the West Hill City's Assistant Governor has started a rebellion! Kill the rebels immediately!"

After that, there was the sound of a horn and the rebel soldiers started to withdraw. The sound of horses could be heard as the golden armored cavalry of the Imperial Guards rushed in.

The rebel soldiers suddenly saw a huge cavalry coming towards

them. They immediately cried out, threw away their helmets and armor before fleeing in all directions.

The assistant governor had turned pale. He shouted in despair, “Don’t run! Fight back! Kill them all!”

The assistant governor might have gone mad but the others had not. The moment they saw that that they were in big trouble, they quickly scattered. The Imperial Guards also spread out and mopped up the rebels at the public square. The cries of misery continued as the rebel soldiers were all slaughtered like chickens by Gordon's cavalry.

Gordon took a group of soldiers and rushed towards Rody to protect him.

Rody was somber and hatefully said, “Seize that assistant governor! Give the order for the Wolf Fang to guard the city gates and make sure no one leaves!”

Gordon saw Rody covered in blood and quickly stepped forward to support him. He then loudly said, “Your Excellency the Duke, do not worry! Before I entered the city, Commander Sieg had already ordered the Wolf Fang soldiers to guard the gates! These rebels will not be able to escape!”

Rody sighed and gritted his teeth. “This scoundrel is extremely audacious! Capture him! I want to tear him apart!”

Jojo was pale and looked at Gordon, “If you had not come, we would have died. Why did you come into the city?”

Gordon earnestly replied, “Actually, when Miss Jojo and the duke entered the city, I dispatched a few people to secretly tail you. Ever since the duke had that mishap in the Northwest region, we have all been extra careful. We could not allow the duke to encounter any more trouble. The soldiers had reported that you all ran into trouble at the public square and you were all outnumbered. I took the soldiers into the city but I did not expect

it to be like this. Why did the assistant governor suddenly rebel?”

Rody waved his hands and did not say anything. Everybody guarded him as he walked towards the assistant governor's mansion.

That night, thousands of the Wolf Fang soldiers surrounded the city gates while the remainder and 2,000 Imperial Guards went inside the city to track down the rebels. A few hundred of Gordon's men had earlier taken control of the local government and protected Rody as well as Jojo. The West Hill City was not quiet that night. The city was brightly lit as the people were thrown into confusion. When dawn came, most of the rebels were captured and gathered at the open area in front of the government mansion.

Those soldiers were not the local defenders of the city. They were the assistant governor's hired bodyguards. After the fierce fighting that night, some of them were immediately killed. Those who were arrested were injured. They were tied up tightly and forced to kneel down.

The assistant governor had taken a few of his subordinates and tried to escape, but they were all blocked by the Wolf Fang soldiers at the city gates . All of his subordinates were then killed during the fight, and he was captured.

Rody personally executed the assistant governor and ordered his soldiers to expose the corpse in public. As for the other rebels who were also arrested, Rody thought about them for a moment. However, when he recalled the slaughter of the citizens that night, he did not hesitate. He ordered for all those rebels to be executed.

After the assistant governor's subordinates were also executed, the entire West Hill City was stirred up. Many of its citizens flocked to the parade of corpses. Even though they were dead, some of the citizens still gathered to throw rotten eggs and tomatoes at their bodies. Obviously, the assistant governor had caused a lot of grievances.

Rody had also ordered some of his soldiers to interrogate a few of the captured prisoners. He was shocked and frightened at the things that were revealed.

The embezzlement of money or the corruption was only the tip of the iceberg. The first problem was the assistant governor's younger brother, Trey, who died at the public square. Trey alone was responsible for deaths of many. Trey had relied on his brother's influence to go wild in the West Hill City. In two years, he forced the end of several rich merchant families and used all of their money for his own personal gains. The elder brother was even more problematic. His own bodyguards were all outlaws. On the surface, he was the Assistant Governor of the Empire but he relied on his subordinates and did many questionable businesses. In the last few years, there were robberies at the borders of the Westwood province which exterminated the entire families of several wealthy merchants. These were all part of the assistant governor's actions. Millions of gold coins were also found in the assistant governor's home.

Half of the officials in the Westwood province had collaborated with the assistant governor. Many were in cahoots with the assistant governor, and there were also some who were afraid of his influence. He had relied on the support of such officials to become the governor of the capital city.

Seeing the report of the long list of names, Rody sneered and smashed the table in anger. With a loud crash, the table frame broke.

“Dispatch 2,000 soldiers to various places in the Westwood province! Investigate those who collaborated with him! Do not allow a single one of those involved to escape! Arrest them all for me to personally question!” Rody said ruthlessly, before he frowned at Gordon and asked, “Westwood province is my territory. Do I need permission from the Imperial Capital if I want to punish them?”

Gordon lightly replied, “By right, you will need permission from the Imperial Capital because they are all officials of the Empire. However, this time Miss Jojo was almost killed by them. I believe that His Majesty would also not defend them! My advice is that we arrest them first and wait for the orders from His Majesty.”

Rody sighed and said, “I cannot believe that the Westwood province is like this. To think that the dignified Tulip Family’s territory is actually so foul!”

Gordon also sighed and replied, “The late duke had already passed away for a few years. Miss Nicole was young and you... you... usually did not like to be involved in such matters. So...”

Rody blushed and lightly said, “The past is the past. Now that I know, I cannot ignore it anymore!” His face sank and he continued, “I do not care about the official and political matters but I know that the law must be fair! I will use blood to scare these people, and if they are found guilty after investigation, they will be sent to the guillotine!”

Gordon was frightened by Rody’s words and could not help but say, “Your Excellency the Duke... Although you are very influential, if you disposed of all of them... the government will be in disorder. We do not know who else in the Imperial Capital is also collaborating with them.”

Seeing that the duke did not speak, Gordon gritted his teeth and said in a low voice, “There are some things I need to say! The Westwood province may be Tulip Family’s territory but in the past few years, the Tulip Family was starting to fall. As a result, control of the territory was also not as strict as before. Most of the officials in the Westwood province were placed by the people from the Imperial Capital. The Westwood province is rich, fertile and flourishing. Obviously, everyone would be envious! Although the annual income is still handed over to the Tulip Family, a lot of money is still secretly embezzled! The Westwood province is a precious gold mine that is constantly being fought over by

influential and powerful people. Your Excellency the Duke is still young, and you have not established yourself in the Imperial Capital. If you offend so many people within such a short time... I think it would be better for you to slow down. Some people should be executed but if possible some people... should be released! When Your Excellency has established yourself, it will still not be too late to dispose of them one by one!”

Rody laughed coldly and said, “If I do not care about my own territory being messed up so badly by others, then there is no need to talk about the Tulip Family’s stupid glory! Say no more! The longer these people remain in the Westwood province, the more harm they will cause! Did you not see how many innocent people died in the public square that day? Hmph, the West Hill City only has one pair of such brothers! How many more people like these brothers are there in other places?”

As Gordon walked out, Rody sighed and sat down.

“Andy, are you here?!” Ever since Rody was healed by the Black Veiled Saint, he was once again in contact with Andy. They had already met each other in Watt Fortress. However, Andy was, after all, a skeleton and could not move around in front of people. Most of the time, he stayed in the box.

Andy’s voice resounded in his mind. “Boy, why do you have such a heavy murderous aura? You are not someone who is really of the Tulip Family. The things that happened in their territory has got nothing to do with you. Why are you so angry? I think Gordon’s advice was good.”

Rody spoke indifferently. “The Tulip Family’s glory? This has nothing to do with the Tulip Family! If the Westwood province is like this, what about the rest of the Empire? Just an assistant governor dared to openly rebel because of greed. His subordinates had gathered so many desperate runaways. What about the rest of the Empire? What about the Northern and Southern regions?”

“You are becoming more and more tough. You now have a murderous aura, and you are no longer soft-hearted at all!” Andy sighed.

Rody’s expression showed a tinge of pain as he gave a wry smile and said, “Murder? Did you forget? Dandong’s notes advised to use heavy punishment in troubled times! Reeking of blood is not a good thing but during a critical moment, it is more useful than anything else! Killing people... I am no longer the soft-hearted Rody... hehe... Kill... for every piece of trash I kill, tens or even hundreds of innocent people will live! Kill one to save ten. Kill ten to save hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands. At the end of the day, I do not mind even if I am covered in blood! On the battlefield, if the enemy does not die, I will! This is the principle that I have long remembered!”

Rody slowly stood up and went towards the window to look at the bright sun at the distance. He then said softly, “Not only the Tulip Family’s glory...but the whole of Radiant Empire is about to fall!”

Chapter 97: Scoundrels of the Political Circle

Rody and the others were delayed at West Hill City for several days. Five days later, at noon, they arrived in the Imperial Capital.

From a distance, they saw the majesty of the Imperial Capital. The Empire's symbol, the Thorn Flower banner, fluttered against the walls. Golden armored warriors stood above the walls. The battle axes in their hands gleamed; they were a powerful and spectacular sight. The city had a 100-meters tall tower which shined brightly as the large magical crystal at the top of the tower reflected sunlight.

"We are home!" Sieg sighed, sitting on his horse. He turned his head and looked at the soldiers behind him. The soldiers all looked exhausted but excited.

The main gate of the Imperial Capital had been opened wide since morning. Countless people had learned about the triumphant return of the duke. A huge crowd had rushed outside the city to greet him. That day, fresh flowers once again ran out of stock in the Imperial Capital. The public security soldiers could only smile wryly as they looked at the enthusiastic residents of the Imperial Capital. Remembering the chaos on the day the duke left for his expedition, the public security soldiers made better preparations this time. Even the commander specially wore his helmet in fear of over-enthusiastic women scratching his face.

Rody had already heard news from the Imperial Guards that His Majesty would personally go out of the city to welcome him. From afar, he could see the public security soldiers holding back the crowd on the periphery of both sides of the road. The Imperial Guards stood further down the road on both sides. The road was already blanketed in flowers. From afar, he could also see a metallic eight-wheeled carriage parked outside the city gates. Even the horses that were selected were white horses of the best quality.

Rody's two commanders, Sieg and Gordon dismounted from their horses when they were about 100 paces away. They walked the rest of the way. The soldiers behind them also dismounted from their horses.

The Emperor of the Empire, Abbas XI wore a ceremonial dress. He raised his head and stood on the carriage.

The group slowly walked in unison towards the carriage until Rody waved for them to stop. After that, Rody, Gordon and Sieg knelt down and said, "Your subordinates did not fail Your Majesty and have repelled the enemy!" The three of them spoke together. Sieg and Gordon spoke as loudly as they could. However, Rody was not particularly fond of the emperor. He lowered his head and only mouthed the words.

Abbas XI looked satisfied and waved his hands. He slowly got down the carriage and walked towards the three of them. He personally brought the three up and embraced them in an ostentatious fashion in the etiquette of the Empire to greet their triumphant return.

Subsequently, the guards of the Imperial Family cheered, and the surrounding crowd also shouted.

"Long live the Duke of Tulip Family!"

"Long live the 'Lightning God's Whip'!"

"Long live the Empire!"

"Long live His Majesty the Emperor!"

Fresh flowers rained down on them as colored ribbons flew. As the people celebrated happily, the army marched slowly into the city.

Abbas XI deliberately pulled Rody's hand enthusiastically as he walked to the front. He left his carriage and ordered someone to get him a horse. He then rode side by side with Rody and enjoyed the cheers of the people. Abbas XI smiled, and his slightly pale face

looked more flushed than usual.

Rody showed a prudent and respectful expression but was disgusted in his heart.

First of all, the war in the Northwest region had actually ended in the defeat of the Empire.

A vast amount of land was occupied by the enemy, and several military fortresses also fell into their hands. In the end, it was thanks to his reinforcements that they could protect Watt Fortress instead of losing everything.

On top of that, according to custom, the Duke of the Tulip Family (although he was an impostor) had commanded the Northwest Legion to repel Reuenthal and should have been given the post of an army chief in the Northwest region. However, the emperor did not do that. The moment the battle was over, the emperor had ordered the duke to return. Obviously, the emperor was not willing to leave the 100,000 soldiers of the Northwest region under his command.

The emperor had initially sent Rody there and hoped for Reuenthal to cut him down so that he could get rid of his greatest threat, the Tulip Family. The emperor however, did not expect Rody's surprise attack to have caused so much chaos in the Great Moon Kingdom's territory, eventually forcing Reuenthal to withdraw and concentrate on the power struggle in the Great Moon Kingdom. Although the Northwest region was protected, the thorn still existed. Probably, the emperor was more disappointed that the duke was still alive than happy that the fortress was saved.

The Wolf Fang soldiers immediately went on to their base at the Central Cavalry's military camp. Rody, Sieg and Gordon followed His Majesty back to the palace to accept their reward.

All the high level government and military officials had already gathered in the audience hall. Rody, who followed Abbas XI into the audience hall was the center of attention. The ministers gazed

at him full of admiration and joy, although some were jealous.

They waited for Abbas XI to slowly sit on his throne and look at the people present. He then said, “The Duke of the Tulip Family has gone to the Northwest region and triumphantly returned. He has defeated Reuenthal, and this will be regarded as a great contribution to the Empire. Let us cheer for the glory of the Empire and the Duke of the Tulip Family!”

There was a thunderous applause as all the nobles and ministers cheered. The people of the military cheered happily as they looked at their military spiritual leader and felt gratified.

After the applause, a skinny old man in black robes walked to the middle looking very calm as he slowly said, “Your Majesty, I have something to say!”

“Marquis Garoline, you are the Military Minister of the Imperial Army! Now that Duke Rudolph has returned, you, who are in charge of military affairs, will also receive merit!” Abbas XI laughed.

Marquis Garoline raised his head and solemnly said, “Your Majesty, the Duke of the Tulip Family has obtained a great merit. He must be rewarded!”

The moment Rody heard this, he trembled. He clearly knew that Military Minister Garoline was not a good person. The Lionheart Family had always wanted to suppress the Tulip Family. Previously at the banquet, Rody had crossed paths with Garoline’s nephew, the Northern Region’s Army Chief, Milo. Now, Garoline had suddenly requested for His Majesty to reward Rody. Rody knew that nothing good would come out of it.

Abbas XI nodded and immediately said, “Of course. However, how do you, as the military minister, suggest we reward him?”

Before Garoline could speak, a middle-aged general beside him who was in military uniform spoke, “Your Majesty, according to

the tradition of the Empire, the Duke of the Tulip Family would serve as the army chief of the Central Cavalry! The Duke of the Tulip Family has obtained great merit! We should let him take command of the ‘Lightning God’s Whip’!”

The moment he finished speaking, his proposal was immediately met with agreement from many other military generals.

Rody sighed in his heart. He knew that these generals were trying to help him in consideration of the late duke. However, their minds were too simple. His Majesty would not even give him control over the 100,000 soldiers of the Northwest Legion, nevermind the 200,000 soldiers who were also known as the Empire’s most elite army, the ‘Lightning God’s Whip’. Besides, being in control of the ‘Lightning God’s Whip’ was equivalent to controlling the entire Imperial Army in the Imperial Capital. The total 250,000 soldiers based in the Imperial Capital comprised of 200,000 in the ‘Lightning God’s Whip’ for defending the Capital and the 50,000 Imperial Guards for defending the palace. How could the emperor, who was suspicious of the Tulip Family, be willing to place him as the leader of the Empire’s largest army?”

Sure enough, Abbas XI only nodded but did not say anything. Rody noticed that the emperor secretly glanced at Marquis Garoline. The Marquis then coughed gently and said, “The generals’ words are certainly reasonable! But...” Rody sneered in his heart as he thought:

I was just waiting for your ‘but’!

“... But the current Duke of the Tulip Family is still young! The Lightning God’s Whip is the Empire’s most elite army and is responsible for defending the Imperial Capital! The duke is still less than 20 years old. I am afraid that he would not be competent enough to handle such an important task!” Having said these words, the Marquis bowed to the emperor.

“Nonsense!” A hot-tempered general shouted loudly. “The duke

may be young, but there have been cases in the history of the Empire where a young duke became the commander-in-chief of the army! For example, the dukes of the fourth and the seventh generation have served as the Commander-in-Chief of the Central Cavalry in their 20s!”

The marquis looked at the general and neither haughtily nor humbly said, “It is true that there are dukes who became commander-in-chief at 20. However, the current duke has not even reached 20 years old and has only fought once on the battlefield!”

“Hmph!” Another general could not help but say, “Only one battle but he could already repel Reuenthal. Is that not enough? If you don’t believe in his ability, send your nephew out to fight and see!”

Garoline then replied without getting angry, “The person who leads the expedition to fight against the foreign country is decided by His Majesty.”

“You said that the duke is young. Your nephew is also young, but isn’t he now a Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Legion?”

Garoline said, “Milo may be young but he is almost 30 years old. Besides, he did not immediately become the army chief of the Northern Legion. Instead, he first gained experience as a troop commander.”

The generals of the military continued to speak but Garoline calmly and patiently replied them. Garoline was much more eloquent than those generals.

“Watch carefully boy!” Andy spoke up in Rody’s mind. “This old man is not a simple person! You can’t tell what he is feeling by his face!”

Rody secretly nodded. He watched from the side and understood that His Majesty and the marquis had colluded to make sure that he would not hold any military power.

Knowing that, he was clear of His Majesty's intentions and understood that His Majesty had made up his mind. As a result, the generals who tried to help him would not get any results. Instead, they would end up offending the emperor. Rody then cleared his throat and loudly said, "Everybody, you do not need to argue anymore!"

All the generals looked at him and kept quiet. They all looked at the young duke and waited for him to speak.

Rody bowed and said, "Your Majesty, I also believe that I am too young and incapable of serving as a Commander-in-Chief of the Legion! Frankly speaking, during the war in the Northwest region, I only managed to force Reuenthal to withdraw by virtue of luck! To call it a victory is out of the question! Just as Marquis Garoline has said, the 'Lightning God's Whip' is the Empire's most elite army and is responsible for guarding the Imperial Capital. I am young and I am afraid that I cannot bear such responsibility!"

Hearing these words, the generals in the military all frowned and sighed in their hearts. A flash of insight appeared in the eyes of Abbas XI as he said, "Duke Rudolph, you are too modest! The Empire will not ignore your contributions! Since you are unwilling to becoming the Commander-in-Chief of the Central Cavalry, what is your proposal?"

Hearing these words, Rody cursed in his heart.

What do you mean I am unwilling? You are the one who is unwilling!

However, he adopted a stern countenance on the surface and said, "I found out that I do not have enough experience when I led the troops in the Northwest region. It was thanks to the help of the two commanders, Gordon and Sieg that we were able to complete Your Majesty's mission! I request Your Majesty to reward Gordon and Sieg!"

Abbas XI smiled and said, "That is natural! I heard that

Commander Sieg has been the commander of the ‘Lightning God’s Whip’ for a long time. I am ready to grant him the title of ‘Viscount’! As for Commander Gordon, I have decided to promote him as the Imperial Guards Deputy Commander!”

Rody thought to himself.

This is a bargain. He does not want to give me military power, but it is as a gesture of good faith. He is giving me two assistants. This is reasonably fair.

He then spoke, “Your Majesty is wise!”

Since Rody mentioned that he did not want to become the Commander-in-Chief of the Central Cavalry, it was difficult to reward him. After all, Rody may be already be a duke but he still did not have a government post. At first, he was the Special Envoy of the Northwest Region but since the war at the Northwest region was over, his special envoy title was also gone. All that was left was to become a troop commander, but how could the duke become a mere troop commander?

Everybody’s opinion varied. Without a proper decision, Rody could only sigh. He remembered Nicole’s words, “The more merits the Tulip Family gets, the higher its status.” In the end, they would have amassed all the glory, until the emperor had nothing left to reward the Tulip Family with.

After that, Garoline coughed and spoke. His peculiar calm voice sounded more like a squeak. “Your Majesty, I think the duke is the pillar of the Empire and the Tulip Family’s banner is the pride of the Empire. Although the Duke is still young, with a few more years of experience...”

Rody’s heart was stirred and secretly thought.

Hehe, the truth is finally going to come out. All those words before were just nonsense. Especially when he mentioned ‘few more years of experience’.

He then heard Garoline say, “Now, the South is fairly stable but the barbarians often cause trouble there. They hide in the mountains and often rebel, costing a lot of the Empire’s military strength and resources! If it were not for them, we could have sent reinforcements from the South to the Northwest region during the war with the Great Moon Kingdom! Now that the war in the Northwest is over, we should solve the problem in the South! I suggest to send the Duke of the Tulip Family to the Southern region! With the reputation of the Tulip Family’s banner, we will definitely be able to frighten the mountain barbarians! First of all, His Excellency the Duke does not have a government post. Your Majesty can send him to the Southeast as a special envoy cum governor general in the Southeast region to control the military and government of the three provinces. He can first work together with the Southern Army Regiment Commander, Camus, to solve the mountain tribe problem. Secondly, Regiment Commander Camus, who is a veteran of the Empire’s military, has vast experience. The duke would be able to train with him for two to three years.”

The moment Garoline finished speaking, Rody heard Andy shout in his mind, “Nasty! Damn, this old man is really something! What shitty Southeast Special Envoy? It sounds impressive like the Northwest Special Envoy but it is only temporary! What do you mean control the three Southeast provinces? Each province has its own governor general! You being there is just a decoration! They will not even make you commander-in-chief but force you to follow behind the Regiment Commander to ‘learn’! How nasty! His words make it sound like you are being given power, but in fact, it is all empty! It is the same as exiling you to the mountains!”

Before the other generals could say anything, Abbas XI immediately smiled. His eyes showed satisfaction as he said, “Good! That is a good idea! The military minister is truly experienced. It certainly sounds like the best solution!”

Rody cursed in his heart, but the moment the emperor said these words, everything was already set and decided. He could not help but show anger in his eyes. He tried to hold back his dissatisfaction as he solemnly bowed and said, “Your Majesty, I am willing to go to the South to learn from General Camus!”

The military generals had much to say, but when they saw that the duke had been given the title of ‘Southeast Special Envoy cum Governor’, plus he had to govern three large provinces, they kept quiet.

The emperor smiled and said, “Good! Let it be so! Duke Rudolph, you have made great contributions in the Northwest region! I now appoint you as the Southeast Special Envoy cum Military Governor. You have military and government authority over three provinces in the Southeast. I hope you can assist the Regiment Commander of the Southern Legion to suppress troubles at the mountains!”

Rody sighed and knelt on one knee. He then thought for a moment and said, “Your Majesty, when I went to the Northwest, I was lucky to have Sieg and the Wolf Fang to help me. Now that I am going to the Southeast, I hope Your Majesty can grant me the Wolf Fang.”

The Emperor was in a good mood at that moment. He thought that the Wolf Fang only had 20,000 soldiers and would not make much of a difference. He had achieved his objective. Now that he had snapped Rody’s wrist, he thought that he should at least give Rody a gift of condolences and readily agreed.

Abbas XI thought to himself and then said, “Duke Rudolph, you must have known that the Great Moon Kingdom’s envoy have already arrived in the Imperial Capital. They will be discussing the peace talks of the Northwest region. You have returned from the Northwest and are familiar with things there. I appoint you as an assistant responsible for the peace talks! I hope you do not disgrace the dignity of the Empire! There is no need to hurry to the

Southern Region. Solve this matter before you depart!”

Rody froze for a moment as he did not expect His Majesty to give him another assignment. For some time, he could not understand those words and looked at Garoline. Garoline was calm and looked proud of himself.

“Idiot, don’t you understand?” Andy sighed in his mind. “What can the Empire obtain by making you negotiate with the Great Moon Kingdom? The land has already been occupied by others and the fortresses have already been captured. The Northwest Legion only has half of its strength remaining. Is there any need to say more? The Empire has been defeated and the emperor will lose face in the peace talks. Asking you to negotiate will make you bear all the humiliation! Ah, how ruthless! This must be that old minister’s wicked idea!”

Rody gritted his teeth and nodded his head. He saw that the military generals nearby also looked disgusted.

In fact, what Andy said was half right. Abbas XI appointing Rody to negotiate was definitely Garoline’s idea. He intended to humiliate the Tulip Family. However, Garoline also had another intention...

The past few days, there was a war in the Northwest region. There had been a lot of discussion on whether they should continue with the war or to seek a peace talk. The military generals were all naturally part of the pro-war faction but Garoline had gathered the nobles to persuade Abbas XI to negotiate for a peace talk.

Garoline had his own reasons which were related to the corruption in the Northwest region. Just a small war in the Northwest had uncovered the corruption there. He was deeply connected to the corruption in the Northwest region. If the two countries had an all out war, a lot of problems would be exposed. He would then be finished. That was why the Northwest region

could not be in turmoil. The only way out was to buy time and slowly cover up the problems.

After the conversation was over, there was a victory banquet in the evening. However, Rody wanted to go back home first.

When the crowd had dispersed, Rody exchanged words with the military officers. Most of them were subordinates of the late duke and were naturally on his side. The generals may have been familiar when it came to war, but when it came to fighting for position, they were no match for Marquis Garoline.

Rody watched Garoline leave and sighed.

This old man is too extraordinary. If I want to compete with him, the generals are not enough. I need a few people with brains to help me.

After thinking a bit more, he laughed at himself.

After so many days, I really think of myself as the duke! I have left the Imperial Capital for so many days. Perhaps, Nicole has found the whereabouts of that playboy. Either way, I am just a temporary duke. Finishing the battle at the Northwest sounds just about enough! When the playboy returns, I am quitting this job! According to Nicole's argument, wouldn't becoming an officer be much easier? The old man is extraordinary, but he is actually the playboy's headache. It should not be my problem, right? If I already knew this, why did I ask His Majesty for the help of the Wolf Fang? What about the Southeast Special Envoy? Hehe, I'll let the playboy go to the mountains. Let him deal with it!

The thought of seeing Nicole very soon made him feel excited. He immediately rushed out of the Imperial Palace toward the mansion of the Tulip Family.

Chapter 98: Crusade

The Tulip Family's mansion was crowded with people. There were many luxurious carriages parked outside the residence. It was as if all the prestigious people from the Imperial Capital had gathered there. It had not been that way since the death of the late duke.

Along the way, Rody attracted a huge crowd. He had great difficulty getting through the crowd, before he could enter the Tulip Family mansion.

Rody dismounted from the horse. He walked a few steps towards Nicole. When he saw Nicole's thin face which was full of affection, he felt like immediately rushing over to embrace her. However, Rody saw a lot of people next to her so, he took a deep breath to suppress the excitement in his heart. After all, Nicole was currently his 'sister', and he should not act too outrageously.

He smiled and called out, "Sister!" After that, he gently embraced her according to the etiquette of the nobles. As he hugged her, he quietly whispered into her ear, "I missed you." Nicole's face turned red, and she stepped back. After she had calmed down, she said, "Go quickly. There are a lot of people waiting for you."

Once he was in the hall, he was surrounded by many important dignitaries. A lot of them congratulated him, and there were also those who tried to win him over. There were also some who actually came to match-make. Everybody in the Imperial Capital knew about him and his victory in the Northwest. In addition, he came from the glorious Tulip Family. They knew that the duke's future was going to be very bright.

Rody reluctantly kept his spirits up to cope with all those people. However, his eyes showed his impatience as he looked to Nicole for help.

These guys are really troublesome.

Rody would have preferred to kick them all out and just have Nicole alone with him.

Nicole was an experienced noble lady. She calmly dealt with the flattery from the crowd and gave a faint smile. “Ladies and gentlemen, we are touched by your enthusiasm. However, Seth has been rushing about and has gone through great hardships. Tonight, His Majesty will also be holding a feast. Seth has just returned and will need to rest and prepare himself.”

The people all understood and immediately left. A few people took Rody’s hands and said a few touching words before they left. They even forced themselves to cry a few tears.

At long last, Rody noticed that he and Nicole were the only two who remained in the hall. He cleared his throat and said, “Sister, I have something to tell you.”

Nicole nodded and said, “Let’s go to the study.”

After dismissing the servants, the two of them entered the study room. Nicole entered first and turned around as she slowly said, “Rody, I already know about the incident at Westwood province. You were a little too impatient in the way you handled the matter... Aargh!”

Rody had been walking in large strides behind Nicole. He turned around and then he closed the doors. Ignoring the fact that Nicole was still talking, he moved forward, stretched his hands around her waist and kissed her beautiful, tender lips.

Nicole could not guard herself against Rody in time and soon found herself in his embrace. In a panic, she closed her eyes and felt the warmth from Rody’s lips. She could also feel Rody’s breath, and a strange feeling entered her heart.

After an indefinite time, Nicole felt like she was drained of energy, and her whole body fluttered. After that, Rody raised his head and stared at Nicole. Nicole gradually recovered. Her face

turned red and she said in a low voice, “You, you have become even more daring!”

Rody’s face also turned red as he replied, “Just a little bit more daring.” He was about to bend down and kiss her again when Nicole gently slipped out of the way and said, “Enough. Don't... Be careful so that no one sees.”

Rody sighed and slowly let go of Nicole. He then thought and asked, “Do you have news of Seth? It has been so long. Have your people found him?”

Nicole’s face turned dark as she slowly shook her head and sighed. “I have sent people out to sea since a few months ago, but there is still no news. Where has that bastard disappeared to?”

Rody frowned and asked, “What shall we do then? Must I still pretend to be your brother? I... I really do not want to be your brother!”

Nicole reluctantly smiled and asked, “Is being a duke not good? Gaining the attention of many is really glamorous...”

Rody sighed. “Glamour? I have seen too many things in the Northwest region. Glamour? Hehe...Do you know much blood was shed in exchange for this? I never really had much interest in these things!” He then looked at Nicole’s eyes and softly said, “I just want to be Rody. I want to abandon this identity and be together with you. What shall I do now that I am your brother? Does it mean that we...”

Seeing that Rody was agitated, Nicole gently held Rody’s hands and softly said, “Rody, please be patient! Please be patient for a little more, alright?”

Rody lightly said, “Being a duke may be glamorous but there are a lot hidden murders and filth that need to be dealt with. I am very bored. Nicole, I just want to take you away from here.”

Nicole observed Rody for a long time. She slowly shook her head

and replied, “No, I really cannot do that. I am responsible for the family. Other than you, I have nobody else to rely on.” After that, Nicole burst into tears and cried. Rody’s heart ached. He went closer and gently held her. Nicole gently clung onto Rody and said, “I also want to have an easier time. I also want to be carefree and be together with you! But, I cannot!”

Rody gently smiled. He stretched his fingers and wiped Nicole’s tears away as he softly said, “Alright. It was my mistake. I just returned and I have already made you cry. Do not worry. As long as I, Rody, am around, I will not let the Tulip Family collapse!”

He held the beautiful lady in his arms. Although he felt helpless, what else could he say?

Inadvertently, a slender figure in black robes crossed his mind along with the phrase.

If you do not forget me, I will not forget you.

He remembered that he had almost followed her out of impulse that day.

Nicole and Rody then restrained themselves and discussed about the incident at the Westwood province. Rody had slaughtered a lot of people at the Westwood province. Although he had returned to the Imperial Capital, he had left more than 2,000 Wolf Fang soldiers behind to clean up the public official administration system at the Westwood province. Those few days, many people were executed at the guillotine in the big and small towns. Although most of the populace were happy, Rody had also offended a lot of people.

Nicole was worried. The Westwood province was the Tulip Family’s territory. The military and government of the Westwood province were under the Tulip Family. It was like a small independent kingdom of the Empire. However, those officials were still officials of the Empire. After such a major incident, Rody had executed so many people without waiting for His Majesty’s orders.

That was not good.

On the other hand, Rody was very calm. Abbas XI did not heavily reward him and that made the military very unsatisfied. Even in the Imperial Capital, there was already a lot of criticism. As a result, His Majesty would not purposely pursue the matter in the Westwood province. After all, the Westwood province was the Tulip Family's territory, and it was a private matter. His Majesty would not need to pursue it just because he executed a few people. The emperor needed to pretend to treat him fervently so that he could win back the hearts of the military. It was obvious when His Majesty did not mention anything about the Westwood province that day.

That night, at the banquet in the palace hall, Abbas XI appeared to be very close with Rody. The other ministers and nobles also proposed toasts to Rody. Rody had already heard the words 'young and promising' a few hundred times. Eventually, Abbas XI enthusiastically pulled Rody's hand and took him to the audience hall to receive the cheers of the soldiers.

I only fought a battle in the Northwest region, and the result was neither a victory nor defeat. However, they are celebrating as if we conquered the entire continent. This is too excessive...

In the end, a few military generals made him drink a few glasses of wine, and he finally became drunk.

The next morning, when Rody was still asleep, the Imperial Guards arrived and summoned Rody to immediately report to the Imperial Palace. They only said that His Majesty was anxious to discuss some important things with him and the other cabinet ministers.

Rody was still dizzy and cursed the emperor in his heart.

I am only a phony duke with no power and no soldiers. What's the purpose of asking me to participate in the discussion? Anyway, you and old Garoline have already decided everything. Who are

you trying to fool by pretending to discuss?

Although he criticized the emperor in his heart, Rody still dressed up neatly. The one who served him was the beautiful maid, Angel. However, Rody was no longer a silly boy and he was not flustered when he saw Angel. Rody had on a stern expression as Angel dressed him up in the noble's gown. Rody then smiled and nodded his head at her.

Angel's face turned red but she whispered, "Young Master... no, Master... you are no longer the same as before..."

"What?" Rody asked.

Angel looked down and replied, "You have become more serious and cold."

Rody nodded but did not reply. He thought in his heart.

Both you and Jojo said the same thing. Is Seth really such a glib? I must be careful not to be exposed.

The carriage was prepared and Rody took a few guards with him. He noticed that the way the guards looked at him was different from before. The guards no longer had a respectful but indifferent attitude towards him. Now, the guards and his personal bodyguard Randt looked at him with true respect.

Didn't those old military men from last night say that I was becoming more and more like the late duke? Even though it was a compliment, why do I feel so uncomfortable?

He got on the carriage and was led by the Imperial Guards to the meeting hall in the Imperial Palace. Abbas XI and several cabinet ministers were already sitting there. Seeing Rody walk in, Abbas XI gently said, "Duke Rudolph, there is no need to salute. I invited you here to ask you about the Roland continent."

The Emperor then glanced at Garoline. The military minister then cleared his throat and said, "Your Excellency the Duke, before your return, His Majesty received your report. The report said that

some of the Roland continent soldiers were found in the Great Moon Kingdom. The people of the Roland continent had assisted Reuenthal to fight us. You must be extremely clear about this, so His Majesty has invited you to elaborate.”

Rody thought for a moment, and then he spoke in detail about being intercepted by the Knights of Roland at the grasslands. Naturally, he did not say a word about the Black Veiled Saint but he mentioned that the information was obtained from a captured Roland Knight.

As for Mouse, although he had brought her back to Watt Fortress, she was only there for a day before leaving. No one knew her identity. Although there were many other problems, Seth fortunately did many strange things in the past. Therefore, no explanation was required. Courting women on the battlefield was against the military law, but now that he was in the limelight, nobody dared to find fault with him.

After Rody had finished his explanation, Abbas XI showed a disgusted expression and coldly said, “The people of the Roland continent are truly bold! I ignored them, but they dare provoke me! What shall we do about this?”

Marquis Garoline was the first to stand up and proclaim, “Your Majesty! The people of the Roland continent dared to offend the Empire and naturally, must be taught a lesson! I think Your Majesty can allow the Commander of the Northern Region, Milo, to mobilize the army to give the other party a little warning. The Northwest is currently unstable, and it is not wise to cause more trouble!”

Abbas XI frowned and coldly replied, “Is that all we are doing? The Roland continent is across the ocean. If we mobilize our army, will it really serve as a warning? Hehe, they consider us heathens, but in our eyes, they are the heathens!”

Garoline smiled and said, “In that case, let us call the pope over

to discuss. If we declare war against the Roland continent, it will not only involve the Empire. It is a war against heathens, so the pope will definitely strongly support us. Since a war against heathens is a holy crusade, the pope's Blazing Warriors will surely come forward to help...”

The moment they heard ‘holy crusade’, everybody frowned. All of them had a conscientious expression while Abbas XI was in profound thought.

“Holy crusade!”

The Radiant Empire and the Roland continent had declared war on each other for several hundred years using the ‘holy crusade’ and the crushing of heathens as excuses. However, they did not know how many people had died because of them. Holy crusades were massive and the rivers would be filled with blood. Millions of people perished and countless people lost their homes. Both continents were exhausted, but there was no winner.

The Radiant Empire’s Blazing Warriors were very powerful, but the Holy Knights of the Roland continent were just as good.

To begin another crusade would require them to mobilize the whole of the Empire's forces. The Empire's current situation might not be able to withstand such a devastating war. Moreover, in the Northwest, Reuenthal, the grassland wolf, was waiting to pounce.

Abbas XI thought for a moment before sighing. “A single war will take up too much national strength. Now is not the time for a crusade.”

Garoline smiled and replied, “Since Your Majesty has said so, let us then send a special envoy and ask the pope to also send a counterpart to the Kingdom of Sauron to seek justice from them! Blame them as we mobilize the Northern Legion under the command of Milo to threaten them. The Kingdom of Sauron will not dare to do anything. As long as they are willing to bow down to us, the dignity of the Empire will be protected!”

Abbas XI looked down and frowned.

Seeing the emperor's expression, Rody started to sympathize with him.

In the past, when Abbas the Great founded the Radiant Empire Dynasty, the Empire controlled the entire continent. The army was powerful and prestigious. However, during his rule, the Northwest region had suffered crushing defeats, and there were a lot of internal struggles. Their enemies were also causing problems in the Northern region, resulting in the emperor to feel extremely annoyed.

In the end, for fear of losing his pride, Abbas XI did not decide on what to do with the Roland continent. He said that he needed to further discuss the matter with the cabinet ministers in the future. The topic then shifted to the peace talks with the Great Moon Kingdom.

The main person in charge of the peace talks was the Empire's Finance Minister, Earl Merlow. He was a slender and good looking middle-aged man. The man always had a smile on his face, but his cunning eyes made people feel uncomfortable.

Abbas XI only said a few words and warned Rody again, before telling the crowd to disperse.

The moment they left the Imperial Palace, Rody increased his pace to keep up with Earl Merlow. Then he said, "Your Excellency Merlow, His Majesty requested me to help you with the peace talks with the Great Moon Kingdom... You must understand that I am still young and am not experienced with negotiation. Do you have any idea?"

Earl Merlow smiled and said, "Duke Rudolph, you are too modest. His Majesty may have assigned me as the main negotiator but there is nobody who does not know of your contributions in the Northwest. He said that you were going to be my assistant but actually, you are the main negotiator and I am your assistant.

Without your words of wisdom, I will not be able to subdue those grassland barbarians.”

Rody laughed and secretly cursed.

Crafty old man!

Earl Merlow then gave a witty smile and said, “Your Excellency the Duke, I believe you are close friends with my son, Didi. I will take advantage of my old age to be lazy, so you must work harder! Since we are not busy right now, let us find a place to sit down and talk. Then tonight, we will visit the prince of the Great Moon Kingdom. Is this agreeable?”

Rody thought for a moment and then agreed. They left the palace together in the Earl’s carriage, while the Tulip Family’s carriage was sent back. His other guards followed behind him on their horses.

Chapter 99: Drawing an Alliance

On their way into the Imperial Capital, the guards in front cleared a way for the two high-ranking officials' carriage. That was the power of prestige. Rody was young and impatient. All along the way in the carriage, he kept on inquiring about Merlow's strategy at the coming negotiation. However, the Finance Minister was a crafty person and was good with his words. No matter how Rody asked, Merlow would only say that his purpose was to 'assist the Duke' and refused to divulge his strategy. It was obvious that he was a wise man and knew that the peace talks were just a humiliating treaty. Whatever it was, he would avoid becoming the scapegoat.

After the carriage stopped, Rody was shocked the minute he got out of the carriage. He found himself standing in front of a tall building. From the inside of the building, the sound of people singing and merrymaking could be heard and pretty ladies could be seen dancing. They had arrived at the most celebrated brothel in the Imperial Capital.

Rody looked at the leisurely Earl Merlow. He had never expected the Earl to bring him here. The first time Rody came here, it was together with the Earl's son, Didi. This time, he was here with Didi's father and had a strange feeling.

Earl Merlow smiled and led Rody in. Madam Sophie, who had not seen Rody for a while, immediately rushed out. She uttered all kinds of compliments as she took them into a chamber. The chamber was located along the hall, on the second floor. The chamber had a view of the middle of the hall. A roller screen was slowly lowered. Looking through the screen, they could watch all the dances and performances.

Two beautiful women, from both sides, served them red wine in golden cups. Merlow was relaxed, and he continuously drank three cups of wine. After that, he felt high and slowly lay down on the

leather skin on the floor, lazily watching the performance downstairs.

Rody was bewildered and asked, “Your Excellency Merlow, what did we come here for?”

Merlow grinned and replied. “Your Excellency the Duke, don’t you think that this is an exceptionally good place to have a discussion?”

Rody frowned as he looked at the two beautiful women next to him and said, “I did not expect the Earl to be lecherous, but I am worried about the peace negotiations.”

Merlow laughed as he glanced at Rody and said, “Take it easy. You and Didi came here many times in the past. Besides that, I have a reason to invite you here. You will find out in a while.” The Earl paused for a while before giving a strange smile. “I heard that Miss Myka is your exclusive partner, and others could not get to see her. I heard from Didi that the others can have the chance to see her only if you are around.”

Rody’s face turned slightly red as he remembered his agreement with Myka, but he did not say anything.

Merlow changed the topic and made small talk. After a while, they heard a commotion downstairs. Immediately, a dozen people wearing the leather clothes of the grassland walked in and were greeted by Miss Sophie. The person that stood at the back was a slender old man. The old man wore a magnificent fur clothing and had a golden sword on his waist. His face was rosy, and he squinted his eyes.

“Look, this is Prince Memnon whom the Great Moon Kingdom has dispatched here to negotiate. He is the King’s younger brother and also Reuenthal’s uncle.” Merlow smiled proudly.

Rody’s heart stirred as he looked at those people walking up the stairs. He then whispered, “Reuenthal’s uncle? Does this Prince

support Reuenthal or Prince Sultan? I heard that the competition at Dragon Plateau is quite intense.”

Merlow’s expression changed when he heard Rody’s words. He gave a strange glare and said, “I did not expect Your Excellency to be able to see things so clearly. I heard that this Prince is extremely loyal to their King, but we still do not know which of the Princes he supports. If we can obtain some information here, then our negotiation will be more advantageous.”

“Oh?”

Merlow smiled and said, “This time, you have stirred up trouble at the Northwest grasslands and have even shocked the people at Dragon Plateau. The tribal leaders all blamed Reuenthal for not putting in enough effort. Now, Prince Sultan is gathering support to challenge Reuenthal. The king of the Great Moon Kingdom is old. Both his sons, Reuenthal and Sultan know that the one with more military power will be the future king. The barbarians of the grasslands are different from us in the Empire. The position of Crown Prince is given to the one who has more power. Right now, Reuenthal is an advocate of war. As for Sultan, although we do not know his real intentions, but since he wants to oppose his older brother, he is likely to be an advocate of peace. However, their kingdom is unstable right now with a lot of internal problems, and the Empire is not prepared for war. Both parties want peace. It is just that Reuenthal has put up a tough front while Sultan is more gentle. If we know which side this Prince is taking, then we will at least know where our limit for the negotiation is.”

Rody could not believe that Merlow would say something like that. He could not help but say, “I did not expect Your Excellency to already have an idea. I asked so many questions earlier on our way here. Looks like it was pointless for me to have worried so much.”

Merlow stopped smiling. He looked at Rody for a long time before he slowly said, “Seth, the undercurrents in the Empire are

strong. You and I must be careful.”

“Hm?” Rody was surprised when Merlow stopped calling him ‘Your Excellency the Duke’ but instead called him ‘Seth’. Hearing those words, Rody did not know how to respond.

Merlow gave a meaningful smile and continued, “This peace negotiation, no matter what the outcome is, will certainly attract a lot of condemnation. His Majesty will naturally refuse to take the bad name. Who will be willing to take the blame? I am also not willing, but His Majesty ordered me to deal with the peace negotiations. I have no choice but to obey.”

Rody was startled as he asked. “Your Excellency, Merlow, do you mean...”

Merlow gave a wry smile and said, “The peace negotiation between the two countries is of great importance. I am just a small Finance Minister and an Earl. I cannot carry this burden. Now, the person whom His Majesty relies on the most is definitely you, the Duke. However, you are still young and inexperienced. There is also the Marquis Garoline. However, Marquis Garoline is busy and cannot personally preside over the peace negotiations. This is why the Marquis proposed to His Majesty to give me this assignment. I am reluctant to undertake this heavy assignment. Fortunately, I have Your Excellency the Duke to share this burden...”

After he finished speaking, he looked at Rody with bright eyes.

Rody did not know how to answer. Suddenly, he heard Andy’s voice. “Boy, do you still not understand? He is hinting to you that he is also being framed by that Marquis to handle this negotiation. How could you not understand this? This peace negotiation is like dog sh*t by the roadside. Anyone who sees it will get out of the away. For him to be targeted by Garoline to handle this negotiation means that he and that old bastard are not from the same camp.”

“Then what should I do?”

Andy replied calmly, “Do not trust him so easily. Test him first.”

Hearing that, Rody’s mind was cleared. He cleared his throat and replied, “Your Excellency Merlow, Marquis Garoline is probably busy with the military tasks. He also has a heavy responsibility.”

Merlow looked at Rody and then, he suddenly laughed out loud. His expression was full of ridicule. “Seth, you have just entered officialdom, and you have already learned how to say one thing and mean another.”

Rody’s face turned red and he replied softly, “Your Excellency Merlow, what are you talking about? I do not understand!”

Merlow snorted and continued, “I do not blame you. However, I brought you here to tell you that we do not have to hide anything from each other. Otherwise, I would have just brought you elsewhere. Honestly, being a Military Minister is also an important task. But now, His Majesty only listens to Garoline for everything. Garoline has gone too far. Ultimately, he is just a Military Minister and not a Prime Minister!”

After Earl Merlow said those words, his face showed an expression of anger. However, he looked meaningfully at Rody.

Rody did not expect Merlow to be so blunt. He stayed silent for a moment and then he asked, “Your Excellency Merlow, why did you say all this to me?”

“Garoline, that old man, is just a Military Minister. His intentions are to make the Lionheart Family rise above the Tulip Family and to become the Empire’s most prominent family. Seth, are you not going to do anything about this?”

Rody nodded and looked at Merlow. Then he spoke in a heavy voice, “Earl Merlow, I am just a Duke without any real power. There is no point telling me all these as I am just an outsider...”

“Outsider? Seth! I know about what happened at the Westwood Province! Since many years ago, everyone had called you a playboy

but I did not believe them! That was why I allowed Didi to be close to you. I clearly know that my son will not be able to inherit the title for his entire life. Now that I look at it again, I was right in believing in you. You were able to force Reuenthal to withdraw and you were able to use your wrath to suppress the rebellion at the Westwood Province! Your Excellency the Duke, why are you so careful? I have already spoken all my innermost thoughts to you. Why do you still not trust me?"

Rody was silent. He had many complex thoughts in his mind. He was at a loss with all these intricacies in bureaucracy. He sighed and slowly said, "Your Excellency Merlow, do you mean that you want to overthrow Marquis Garoline? I am afraid it will not be so easy."

"Hmph!" Merlow gave a cold smile. "So what? He is just a member of the Lionheart Family! A few years ago, they still needed to tread carefully around the Tulip Family. However, he took advantage of the time when you were still young to persuade His Majesty and placed his nephew as a Regiment Commander. In the past two years, he had already gained control of the entire Northwest Army. Seth, if you do not act now, in a few years, I am afraid..."

Rody knitted his brow as he gave a cold smile and asked, "Earl Merlow, what do you hope to accomplish by winning me over and dealing with Marquis Garoline?"

Merlow gave a light smile and replied, "Me? I am the Empire's Finance Minister and have already obtained the title of Earl. I do not expect to become a Prime Minister. I only hoped for my son to have a good future. Hehe, I am in charge of the Empire's finances. Naturally, I will know the Lionheart Family's inner dealings in the army. He sees me as a thorn in his side but he still cannot do anything to me. However, in the future... I am afraid he will not tolerate not only my son but also the existence of my entire family!"

With that, he had already said everything he had wanted to. Merlow then looked at Rody who was in deep thoughts. He laughed and woke Rody up from deep thoughts. He lazily said, “Prince Memnon of the Great Moon Kingdom is probably next door. We should go and meet him.” After that, he pulled Rody up and walked through the corridor. They walked towards a hall on the left.

In front of the hall, there were a few grassland warriors. They were dressed in leather clothes and looked fierce and aggressive. Before the two men could approach, a grassland warrior immediately shouted, “Go away! Go away! You are not allowed to come near!”

Rody felt angry and coldly asked, “Are the people of the Great Moon Kingdom so arrogant even in the Imperial Capital?”

Merlow replied without changing his expression, “They were not defeated in the Northwest Region. They also did not suffer heavy casualties or lose any territory. Naturally, they are very confident.”

The Imperial bodyguards rushed in front to glare at the grassland barbarians. One of Rody’s bodyguard, Randt, who was the tallest, stood firmly in front of Rody.

Merlow merely smiled and said, “Tell your master that the Duke of the Tulip Family and Earl Merlow are here to see him.”

Before the guards could reply, a gentle voice sounded out from inside the hall, “Your Excellency the Duke, Your Excellency the Earl, please come in.”

Rody ignored several of those warriors whose hands were at the hilts of their swords. He walked in with big strides.

Prince Memnon was lying lazily on top of an animal skin. When he saw the two of them entering the hall, he just smiled lightly and said, “My subordinates were rude. The two nobles of the Empire,

please do not be offended.” He then gave an eye signal and immediately, two of his subordinates served them two gold cups filled with wine.

“Earl Merlow. This must be the Duke of the Tulip Family. Your Excellency the Duke have made a name for yourself in the Northwest. I did not expect to see you here in the Imperial Capital.” Prince Memnon smiled as he slowly sat up. He raised the gold cup and said, “This is the wine from the Great Moon Kingdom. It is not available in the Empire. If Your Excellencies don’t mind, please try it.”

Before Rody could speak, a large and robust figure, that was standing behind Memnon, coldly asked, “Your Majesty! In the Great Moon Kingdom, this wine is only given to the strong warriors! Does the Empire have any such warriors?”

Rody’s guards became angry and even Merlow frowned slightly.

Prince Memnon just gave a light smile and said, “This is our Great Moon Kingdom’s Regiment Commander of the Royal Cavalry, General Zagreb.”

One of Rody’s bodyguards from the Wolf Fang could not help but coldly say, “Regiment Commander of the Cavalry? Our Excellency the Duke have already killed two commanders in one battle at Watt Fortress. So what, if he is a Regiment Commander...”

Prince Memnon's gaze turned cold as General Zagreb replied, “Good! I have heard that the Duke of the Tulip Family was the Empire’s strongest warrior. I am not convinced! Hehe, Reuenthal’s commanders were not worth mentioning. They were all useless!”

The moment those words came out, Merlow eyes gleamed as he gave a meaningful smile. Prince Memnon deliberately sank his face and said, “General Zagreb. We are guests. Do not be too presumptuous.”

Zagreb grunted heavily and then kept quiet. However, he could

not help but look at Rody with cold eyes. In his heart, he could not believe that that handsome kid was powerful.

Merlow laughed and then slowly said, “Your Royal Highness. Today, His Majesty the Emperor has given the order for the Duke to also attend the peace negotiations. Just now, when I saw Your Royal Highness’ arrival and knew that we will be dealing with each other a lot in the near future, I thought we should have a drink and become friends first.”

Zagreb saw Rody hold the golden cup. He said in a low voice, “Make friends! The Empire was too weak to defeat us on the battlefield and now they say they want to be friends...”

Rody gave a cold smile as he slowly put down the golden cup and looked at Zagreb. Merlow’s heart stirred and thought of taking that opportunity to destroy the spirit of the Great Moon Kingdom, to teach that strength may not benefit them for future peace negotiation. He also smiled, put down his golden cup and lightly said, “General Zagreb. What do you mean?”

Zagreb saw that his master did not say anything, so replied loudly, “The people of the Empire are weak. They do not deserve to drink the wine of our Great Moon Kingdom! This is a special wine used by the Royal Family, and only the brave and strong warriors are allowed partake of it.”

Rody was not angry and he merely smiled. He had killed so many people in the Northwest Region that even though he was smiling, his eyes gave a murderous glare.

Merlow slowly said, “General Zagreb. You keep saying strong and brave warriors. Is the Duke of Tulip Family not worthy as ‘warrior’?”

“Hmph! He must be tested first!” Zagreb saw that his master still did not speak and became more daring.

Randt who stood behind Rody spoke coldly, “Test? Our Duke is

the Empire military's number one! Who are you to dare strike out against our Duke? Where do you stand when compared with your own people of the Great Moon Kingdom?”

That Zagreb was immediately unable to say anything, and his face turned red. He was a reckless person but he understood that no matter how arrogant he was, he would not dare call himself the Great Moon Kingdom’s strongest warrior.

Merlow gave a faint smile and said, “I heard that Your Royal Highness is also of a warrior origin in the Great Moon Kingdom. Our Duke is also a Commander-in-chief. It is quite boring to just drink wine here. How about we go to the hall downstairs and let our subordinates have a competition? We can learn some warrior qualities from one another!”

Prince Memnon smiled and showed his arrogance as he slowly said, “Since the Earl has proposed this, how can we refuse? We, the people of the grassland, are straightforward people! Let’s go down now!”

Chapter 100: Defend

Everybody went to the hall. Prince Memnon's subordinates were arrogant, and without waiting for their master to speak, they drove away the other guests to clear a space. The other guests were people with status. When they saw the clothing of the people who were chasing them away, they knew that that was the Prince of the Great Moon Kingdom. As a result, they restrained their anger and left. The dancers that were originally in the middle of the hall screamed and retreated to the back.

Without waiting for everyone to sit, Zagreb pulled out a huge scimitar and stepped into the middle of the hall. He turned towards Rody and shouted, "Your Excellency the Duke of Tulip Family! You are a brave warrior of the Empire! I, Zagreb, challenge you according to the rules of the grasslands! If you are afraid, admit defeat!"

Randt roared, jumped out and said, "Who do you think you are to challenge our Duke? I am the Duke's guard, Randt! I will teach you a lesson!"

Randt took out his broadsword and walked towards Zagreb.

Both of them were robust men and looked like two towers standing in the middle of the hall. They glared at each other.

Rody was aware of Randt's strength. Randt was stronger than most of the other commanders and possibly Rody himself. Feeling assured, he sneered and looked at Prince Memnon.

Prince Memnon was a big shot of the grasslands and had a straightforward behavior. He loudly shouted, "Zagreb! Don't let me lose face! If you lose, I will make you raise horses for three years!"

The two warriors stepped back, holding on to their weapons. Suddenly, Randt roared and stepped forward. He raised his sword above his head and slashed downwards.

Zagreb held his scimitar above his head, and soon, the sound of their weapons clashing was heard. The two warriors used all of their strength until their muscles bulged. The carpet on the floor also started to tear.

After some time, the two warriors separated a few steps away from each other. Randt did not wait for his opponent to catch his breath and once again threw himself forward. Zagreb was unwilling to be outshined, so he quickly raised his scimitar.

For a time, there were the endless sounds of sword clashing. Both of them were powerhouses. When encountering another strong enemy, both of them flaunted their superiority and confronted each other head on. They both refused to lag behind.

The two large figures continued to fight each other. Suddenly, Randt groaned and took a few steps back. There was a long cut on his chest and a small amount of blood was oozing out from the wound. If he had not dodged quickly, he would have been seriously injured.

Prince Memnon smiled proudly and asked, “Your Excellency the Duke, what do you think of my warrior?”

Rody smiled and looked at Randt. Then he lightly said, “Randt, do not forget that you are fighting under the name of the Tulip Family!”

Randt's body suddenly shook as he gave a violent roar. The roar was like a thunder from mid-air. As he roared, he tore off his shirt, revealing his steel-like muscles. A faint gray brilliance appeared on his body, and his sword emitted some bluster.

“Fighting energy!” Rody’s heart stirred. When he had fought with Randt during the test, Randt had only just comprehended fighting energy. Less than three months later, Randt could already use it. It would seem that Randt had trained very hard during his time in the Imperial Capital.

Randt's eyes were like fire. He roared and rushed forward with a gray aura.

Zagreb looked serious. When he felt the sinister energy hitting his face, he held his sword horizontally.

He then heard the sound of metal breaking. Zagreb was knocked back a few steps away and severely crashed against the wall. Only half of his scimitar remained. His dark face turned red as if he was drunk.

Randt stood at the center of the hall and coldly looked at Zagreb as he said, "You lose!" He then eliminated his fighting energy and put away his broadsword. He walked in front of Rody and bowed. "Your Excellency! I did not disgrace the glory of the Tulip Family!"

Rody nodded and offered Randt the cup as he said, "Good! They said only strong warriors can drink this! Now you can drink this! Let us see who else dares to say that the Empire has no strong warriors!"

Randt looked exhilarated as he knelt down. He then took the golden cup and drank the wine.

Prince Memnon looked gloomy. He slowly stood up and nodded to Rody and Merlow as he said, "Your Excellency the Duke, Your Excellency the Earl, let us meet tomorrow at the negotiating table!"

After that, he walked out without looking at Zagreb. He took his subordinates with him. That Zagreb felt ashamed and followed behind, with his head low.

Merlow then smiled and said, "Your Excellency the Duke. Today, we have destroyed the spirit of the Great Moon Kingdom. I had endured a lot of frustration from them when I dealt with them in the past few days."

Both of them no longer drank any wine and left the brothel. Merlow then took Rody back to the Tulip Family's mansion before he left smiling.

Nicole saw Rody came back looking gloomy and could not help but ask. Rody then sighed and told her about what happened in the brothel.

Nicole frowned. "Randt had won. Why are you not happy?"

Rody shook his head and replied, "What is the purpose of winning a private match like this? There is no use even if we were to win a hundred of such matches. If we have the ability to win on the battlefield, then this is the real glory!"

As for the words Earl Merlow had said, Nicole could only ponder and could not think of what to say.

The next day, Earl Merlow came to pick up Rody to meet Prince Memnon. When both parties met, the peace negotiations started.

The Great Moon Kingdom had an unyielding attitude. From the start of the discussion, they asked for the Empire to surrender Watt Fortress and a million gold coins as compensation.

Both Rody and Earl Merlow did not get angry. They denied those terms and cajoled the other party. After a day of negotiating, Prince Memnon became impatient. However, when he looked at Rody, he did not burst out in anger. Finally, they parted without reaching any favorable term.

Earl Merlow then privately told Rody that their attitude for that day was considered good. When both sides argued during the time Rody was not around, the Great Moon Kingdom had a very aggressive attitude. They would constantly shout a torrent of abusive words and pulled out their swords in irritation.

On the second day of negotiations, Rody told Merlow not to speak. He raised his own voice and requested for the other party to return the captured fortresses and to leave the Empire's territory. However, he did not mention anything about paying for reparations. Seeing Rody's unyielding attitude, one of the Great Moon Kingdom's officers took out his scimitar. Rody then rudely

kicked that officer out of the window before turning around and coldly looked at the angry Prince Memnon. After that, he continued, “Your Highness the Prince! I might as well tell you that I am opposed to peace! If you insist on threatening us with the continuation of the war, I will be very happy to oblige and meet you on the battlefield! But...” After that, Rody turned around and sneered before he continued, “I don’t think Prince Sultan will want Reuenthal to be in charge of the soldiers again. By the way, how is your King’s health? Has Prince Sultan become the crown prince?”

After saying all that, Rody left the depressed Prince Memnon, without looking back.

On the third day, the negotiations were more harmonious and both sides argued about the ownership of Trier Fortress.

The Empire had requested for the return of the stronghold nearest to the Watt Fortress which was the Trier Fortress. This was Rody’s final objective. He clearly understood that while the other party acted tough, they did not want war. Sultan and Reuenthal were too busy competing for the throne and they had no ability to start a war against the Empire. Besides that, when Mouse returned to the Sauron Kingdom in the Roland Continent, the Temple would start finding troubles and would no longer secretly support the Great Moon Kingdom.

Rody had asked for the return of Trier Fortress because the Trier Fortress was nearest to the Watt Fortress. As long as the Empire had both of those fortresses, the two fortresses would be able to complement each other and stabilize the defense situation at the Northwest Region.

Finally, Merlow eloquently suggested that the Empire would pay 500,000 gold coins to redeem Trier Fortress. With the two fortresses as the dividing line, both sides ceased their hard bargaining.

After the negotiations, originally, Rody and Merlow should have

immediately reported back to the Emperor in the palace. However, Rody felt depressed and did not want to go. In the end, Earl Merlow went by himself. Rody then dismissed his bodyguards and strolled alone on a horse around the Imperial Capital.

He unknowingly went into the middle of the public square. Rody looked at the huge statue situated in the square. It was about 10 meters tall.

It was the statue of Abbas the Great, the greatest Emperor of the Empire. It was crafted by a famous sculptor and was lifelike. The Emperor was wearing an armor while holding a long sword. The hilt of the sword also looked majestic. Although it was just a statue, it gave off an air that made people afraid to look at it directly.

Rody recalled that when Abbas the Great was still alive, it was the Golden Age of the Empire. Millions of elite soldiers were under his command and the undefeated banner of the Tulip Family was fluttering. The 'Lightning God's Whip' had swept across the world. The entire continent was conquered by the Empire. The people of the grasslands had surrendered and even the Roland Continent bowed. That was a real glory.

Rody's heart boiled as he walked towards the statue.

While he was in a trance, he did not notice a carriage slowly stop behind him. After that, he suddenly heard, "Your Excellency the Duke!"

Rody turned around and saw a youngster in a servant attire standing in front of him, with his head bowed.

"Your Excellency the Duke, my master wishes to see you," The youngster spoke as he pointed at the magnificent carriage behind him.

Rody frowned, thinking that it was another noble that wanted to curry favor with him and lightly said, "I still have things to do. If your master wants to see me, tell him to go to the Duke's

mansion.”

As soon as Rody finished saying that, the servant suddenly smiled and whispered, “Your Excellency the Duke, my master said that she is Rody’s friend.”

The last sentence slowly entered Rody’s ears and gave him such a shock that he almost fell off his horse.

Table of Contents

[Masked Knight](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Acknowledgement](#)

[Chapter 1: Warriors and Virgins](#)

[Chapter 2: A Failed Robber](#)

[Chapter 3: Rich family of the Imperial Capital](#)

[Chapter 4: Amorous Surprise Attack](#)

[Chapter 5: The Crafty Playboy](#)

[Chapter 6: Nicole's Decision](#)

[Chapter 7: Abnormal Family](#)

[Chapter 8: Sword Master](#)

[Chapter 9: God's Language](#)

[Chapter 10: Nicole's Secret](#)

[Chapter 11: Why Did It Turn Out Like this?](#)

[Chapter 12: Rabbit Ears, Donkey Ears](#)

[Chapter 13: Young Master's Gorgeous Servant](#)

[Chapter 14: The Masked Person \(1\)](#)

[Chapter 15: The Masked Person \(2\)](#)

[Chapter 16: Reaching a Higher Level](#)

[Chapter 17: Charming Visitor at Night](#)

[Chapter 18: The Skeleton Can Speak!](#)

[Chapter 19: Subversion](#)

[Chapter 20: The Voyeur](#)

[Chapter 21: Family Degenerate](#)

[Chapter 22: The Colossus Randt](#)

[Chapter 23: I Did Not Lose!](#)

[Chapter 24: Skeleton Andy](#)

[Chapter 25: Amazing Rumours](#)

[Chapter 26: Feigned Illness](#)

[Chapter 27: Donkey Ears Exposed](#)

[Chapter 28: The Lying Skeleton](#)

[Chapter 29: Rich Folk's Evening Banquet](#)

[Chapter 30: Stuck in Gilded Party](#)

[Chapter 31: Peerlessly Charming](#)

[Chapter 32: Jealous Nicole](#)

[Chapter 33: Tear Stained Face of a Beauty](#)
[Chapter 34: Sinful Love](#)
[Chapter 35: Soul Swap](#)
[Chapter 36: Criticism](#)
[Chapter 37: Abstain from Women](#)
[Chapter 38: Female Might](#)
[Chapter 39: Youth's Aspiration](#)
[Chapter 40: Innate Rebellious Spirit](#)
[Chapter 41: The Fake Playboy](#)
[Chapter 42: Voyeur Skeleton](#)
[Chapter 43: A Terrifying Matter](#)
[Chapter 44: A Gang of Scoundrels](#)
[Chapter 45: Romantic Arena](#)
[Chapter 46: Song of an Unrivalled Beauty](#)
[Chapter 47: Fierce Fight in the Courtesan Quarters](#)
[Chapter 48: Change in Situation](#)
[Chapter 49: Imperial Family Guards](#)
[Chapter 50: Glory and Disgrace](#)
[Chapter 51: Entrusted Important Task](#)
[Chapter 52: Night Exploration of the White Tower](#)
[Chapter 53: Relic from 200 Years Ago](#)
[Chapter 54: Sunflower Treasure](#)
[Chapter 55: Horseback Archery Examination](#)
[Chapter 56: Impressive Eight Directions](#)
[Chapter 57: Inheriting Peerage in the Audience Hall](#)
[Chapter 58: A Tragedy](#)
[Chapter 59: Lightning God's Whip](#)
[Chapter 60: The Last Hope of the Empire](#)
[Chapter 61: A Curious Coincidence](#)
[Chapter 62: Farewell Myka](#)
[Chapter 63: Old Man Mark](#)
[Chapter 64: Life-Saving Treasure](#)
[Chapter 65: Glorious Expedition](#)
[Chapter 66: Life and Death Look Alike](#)
[Chapter 67: The Village](#)
[Chapter 68: Night Attack](#)
[Chapter 69: Justice](#)
[Chapter 70: Before The War](#)
[Chapter 71: Fierce Battle at Watt](#)

[Chapter 72: Bloodstained Tulip](#)
[Chapter 73: Mighty Army](#)
[Chapter 74: The Scary Truth](#)
[Chapter 75: Unfriendly Banquet](#)
[Chapter 76: Long Distance Raid](#)
[Chapter 77: Blood Oath](#)
[Chapter 78: Knights of Roland](#)
[Chapter 79: Holy Light](#)
[Chapter 80: Black Veiled Saint](#)
[Chapter 81: Changing Roles](#)
[Chapter 82: The Beautiful Prisoner](#)
[Chapter 83: A Thousand Year Old Tale](#)
[Chapter 84: To Never Leave Each Other](#)
[Chapter 85: Wolves Attack](#)
[Chapter 86: Special Envoy of the Imperial Capital](#)
[Chapter 87: Oath To Kill!](#)
[Chapter 88: Mysterious Visitor at Night](#)
[Chapter 89: Skeleton of the Night](#)
[Chapter 90: Reshape Origin](#)
[Chapter 91: The Pain of Separation](#)
[Chapter 92: Kill Immediately](#)
[Chapter 93: The Westwood Capital City](#)
[Chapter 94: Provocation](#)
[Chapter 95: Rebellion](#)
[Chapter 96: Stench of Blood in the Setting Sun](#)
[Chapter 97: Scoundrels of the Political Circle](#)
[Chapter 98: Crusade](#)
[Chapter 99: Drawing an Alliance](#)
[Chapter 100: Defend](#)